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DUTTON COOK.

(BORN, JAN. 30, 1830. DIED, SEPT 11, 1883.)

ON THE STAGE.

STUDIES OF THEATRICAL HISTORY AND THE ACTOR'S ART.

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BY

DUTTON COOK,

AUTHOR OF "A BOOK OF THE PLAY," "HOURS WITH THE PLAYERS," ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

A BOOK OF THE PLAY.

NEW AND CHEAPER EDITION.

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PREFACE.

I ASK my readers to accept 'On the Stage' as a companion or supplement to 'A Book of the Play.' In preparing that work for publication some years since, I was constrained to omit sundry chapters and to abandon the discussion of several topics that were really germane to the matter, simply because my volumes could only be of certain dimensions and comprehensiveness, and because experience has proved that the proverbial pint decanter cannot anyhow be made to contain a quart of liquor. It was expedient also to consider the power of endurance of those to whom the book was addressed. I have noticed that an author's attempts once for all to exhaust a subject absolutely, have sometimes resulted unfortunately in the complete exhaustion of his public.

I have been encouraged, however, to resume and continue my self-imposed task. My readers have been allowed a fair measure of

breathing time, and clearly the subject upon which I have employed myself has of late gained greatly in popularity and importance. The drama is very much with us just now; the players are almost extravagantly in favour; they have become personages and celebrities —in right, it may be, less of their own merits than of the fact of their vocation. Society has indeed moved curiously near to the stage; but a very thin partition now divides the drawing-room and the "boards;" the amateur dogs the heels of the professional actor, the toe of the first named coming so near the heel of the last as to "gall his kibe;" the theatre is more in fashion in England than it has been for almost a century. Unquestionably there is room for 'On the Stage:' so very many express interest in its theme.

It is to be understood of this, as of my former book, that it is concerned with record and not directly with criticism. Let me repeat, however, that I have not pretended to produce that formal sort of stage history which deals largely in regular and chronological accounts of theatres and managements, their rise and fall, discomfiture or triumph, as the case may have been, in biographies of players and playwrights, lists of plays, first

and last appearances, and so on. I have rather planned to supply a genuine guide to the character and economy of scenic illusion in England, an account of the growth and development of the actor's art amongst us and of our system of theatrical exhibition, with a gathering from various sources of many details, illustrations, and curiosities of histrionic life and character past and present. I may mention that I have even thought it well, under the title of "Al Fresco," to include some description of the vanished pleasure-grounds and "tea-gardens" of London and its suburbs. The account may, I trust, be found interesting in itself, and it is to be remembered that upon the history and fortunes of our theatres the existence of the tea-gardens of the past had a very significant effect. The stage of a "burletta house" in one of those open-air places of entertainment saw the commencement of that conflict with the legitimate drama, that first invasion of the monopolies enjoyed by the patent houses, which led ultimately to their complete overthrow and the firm establishment of theatrical free-trade amongst us. Systematically I have endeavoured as opportunity offered to make acknowledgment of the authorities I stand indebted to for the many facts and

figures, it may be also the fictions, set forth or contained in these volumes.

Further of my book I need hardly write. I am content that the reader should form his own opinion upon it. I will only add that I have certainly taken pains to furnish him with information, and I trust he may be able to pronounce that I have also succeeded in entertaining him. For I am satisfied a book of this class fails of its purpose if it does not amuse as well as edify.

DUTTON COOK.

69, *Gloucester Crescent,*
Regent's Park.

[Owing to the sudden and lamented death of Mr. Dutton Cook, the labour of seeing the contents of these two volumes through the press has devolved upon a friend. Fortunately, however, Mr. Cook had carefully revised all the chapters for the printer, and the editor's functions have therefore been almost exclusively confined to seeing that the text is printed in conformity with the author's revision.—M. T.]

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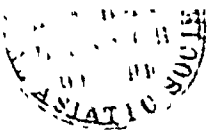

ON THE STAGE.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE ART OF ACTING.

ROBERT LLOYD, addressing his poem, 'The Actor,' to his friend, Bonnel Thornton, refers to the difficulty of teaching the player's art. Certain general principles might be stated, but the best method of applying these could only be left to the theatrical aspirant to discover for himself. He is fortunate if he is possessed of genius, but, denied that advantage, he must do as well as he can without it.

> Acting, dear Thornton, its perfection draws
> From no observance of mechanic laws:
> No settled maxims of a favourite stage,
> No rules delivered down from age to age,
> Let players nicely mark them as they will,
> Can e'er entail hereditary skill.
> * * * * *
> Perfection's top with weary toil and pain,
> 'Tis Genius only that can hope to gain.
> The Player's profession (though I hate the phrase,
> 'Tis so *mechanic* in these modern days)
> Lies not in trick or attitude, or start,
> Nature's true knowledge is the only art.
> The strong-felt passion bolts into his face;
> The mind untouched, what is it but grimace?

> To this one standard make your just appeal,
> Here lies the golden secret: LEARN TO FEEL.
> Or fool, or monarch, happy or distrest,
> No actor pleases that is not *possessed.*

There have not been wanting, however, authorities who have dealt less loftily and more precisely with the subject, and have even professed to teach histrionic art in easy lessons, promising to perfect the pupil within a brief period. Early in the century was published a work specially designed to serve "candidates for the sock and buskin," and lengthily entitled: 'The Thespian Preceptor; or a Full Display of the Scenic Art, including Ample and Easy Instructions for Treading the Stage, Using Proper Action, Modulating the Voice and Expressing the Several Dramatic Passions; Illustrated by Examples from our most approved Ancient and Modern Dramatists, and calculated not only for the Improvement of all Lovers of the Stage, Actors, and Actresses, but likewise of Public Orators, Readers, and Visitors of the Theatres Royal.' To this luxuriant description of his book the author or compiler added an admission that "the art of acting is not so easy as it is often imagined to be by young persons who are in the habit of visiting theatres or reading plays, and who become enamoured with certain characters, 'particularly in tragedy, which is the most difficult,' and who, self-deceived, flatter themselves they are competent to represent them upon the stage."

Still, while holding "the essentials of an actor and actress to be great and numerous," the Thespian Preceptor humbly solicits all candidates for dramatic fame to attend to his instructions, protesting that these, combined with study and practice, may render his readers acquisitions to the stage or dissuade them from vain and vexatious attempts.

Lloyd had written:

> The player's province they but vainly try
> Who want these powers—Deportment, Voice, and Eye.

The Theatrical Preceptor, however, maintains that "an appropriate education" is the first essential of the histrionic aspirant. "Every gentleman should be a classical scholar; every lady should be mistress of her own and of the French language." A good education will give the candidate judgment, and enable him to avoid false accents and mispronunciations, and to discover new beauties in the text he delivers, fresh means of impressing the audience. "An actor of judgment," says our Preceptor "will also beware of impropriety." If the scene represents a room he will appear uncovered; if he is supposed to be out of doors he will not keep his hat under his arm; he will not wear powdered hair when personating an antique Roman; he will not, after he has read a letter, throw it carelessly down or let it fall upon the stage, unless his author's stage-directions so require.

The next requisites, particularly for tragic and genteel characters, are personal advantages, elegant address, and harmoniousness of voice. The player whose stature is short, is informed that he cannot successfully represent the serious heroes of the stage, though he may appear with credit in low comedy. Harsh monotonous sounds destroy the effect of every speech. Some respectable performers may have prospered by means of attention and industry in spite of grave vocal deficiencies, but as a rule a powerful, articulate voice is absolutely necessary to success upon the stage. "Can you shout?" a country manager is said to have enquired once of a youthful aspirant to histrionic honours. "I rather flatter myself I can," was the reply. "Then," enjoined the manager, "learn to shout in the right place and you'll do." And no doubt a measure of success has always attended the efforts of the vociferous. In the theatre sound and fury, even when they signify nothing or very little, the o'er-doing of Termagant, the out-Heroding of Herod, the tearing a passion to tatters to very rags, mouthing, ranting, splitting the ears of the groundlings, have always had charms for many, have rarely gone wholly unrewarded with applause. Still, given a capacity for shouting, the "right places" have to be discovered. After all, the actor is not required merely to exert his lungs; he

must also exercise his judgment. On this head Lloyd lays down certain elocutionary laws:

'Tis not enough the voice be sound and clear,
'Tis modulation that must charm the ear.
* * * * * *
The voice all modes of passion can express
That marks the proper word with proper stress,
But none emphatic can that actor call
Who lays an equal emphasis on all.
Some o'er the tongue the laboured measures roll
Slow and deliberate as the parting toll,
Point every stop, mark every pause so long.
Their words like stage processions stalk along.
All affectation but creates disgust,
And e'en in speaking we may seem too just.
* * * * *
In vain for them the pleasing measure flows,
Whose recitation runs it all to prose;
Repeating what the poet sets not down,
The verb *disjoining* from its friendly noun,
While pause, and break, and repetition *join*
To make a discord in each tuneful line.
Some placid natures fill the allotted scene
With lifeless drone, insipid and serene;
While others thunder every couplet o'er
And almost crack your ears with rant and roar.
More nature oft and finest strokes are shown
In the low whisper than tempestuous tone.
And Hamlet's hollow voice and fixed amaze
More powerful terror to the mind conveys,
Than he, who swollen with big impetuous rage
Bullies the bulky phantom off the stage. Etc., etc.

In like manner our Thespian Preceptor dwells upon the management of the voice. Much depends upon the player's setting out in a proper key and at a due pitch of loudness. The speaker is bidden to grow warm by degrees, "as the chariot-wheel by its continued motion." A cold declamatory delivery is reprehended. The force, or pathos, with which a speech is delivered

should increase gradually, the loudest note being reserved for the climax. In his Essay upon the Art of Acting, Aaron Hill specially recommends the players as the surest means of strengthening their elocutionary powers, "to warm, dephlegm, and clarify the thorax and the windpipe by exerting, the more frequently the better, their fullest power of utterance; thereby to open and remove all hesitation, roughness, or obstruction, and to tune their voices by effect of such continual exercise, into habitual mellowness, ease of compass and inflexion; just for the same reason why an active body is more strong and healthy than a sedentary one."

Action our Preceptor describes as "another grand essential," adding truly enough that "without action no actor or actress can be said to act." Action is composed of "standing, walking, running, attitude, and gesture," and to accomplish these properly, the use and management of the eye, the arm, the hand, the knee, the legs and feet, and the becoming carriage of the body, have to be understood. Tragic action is explained to be daring, energetic, and impetuous to excess. Actors with few exceptions are said to be contented with the wretched and ignorant persuasion that a long stride, a uniform swing of the arm, and a monstrous, clamorous bellow are of the grand requisites of a tragedian. It is pointed out that at times an unimpassioned deportment is

required of the player. In replying to some necessary question of the play it is as ridiculous to swing the arms majestically as to keep both hands in the pockets. The performer is cautioned against certain ill-habits and errors of bearing and gesture. Some actors are accused of raising first the right hand and then the left with a puppet-like regularity of action. Some cannot speak without clenching their fists, or placing their arms akimbo, mistaking for an attitude of grandeur the certain sign of vulgar and inflated imbecility; others while speaking persist in shaking a single finger, some two fingers, some the whole hand, and cannot be persuaded to dispense with this tiresome accompaniment to their elocution. The art of walking the stage has to be acquired. Long strides and short steps are declared to be equally objectionable, while the pace of measured affectation, the march of opera-dancers, is said to destroy reality and to invite ridicule. Country actors are charged with a wearisome and absurd habit of first stepping forward and then stepping back, and of continuing the mechanical and monotonous exercise throughout an entire scene. London players are counselled to reform this altogether. Another habitual error is also denounced. The performer is told to turn his full face to the audience, while his eye, nevertheless, preserves a complete unconsciousness of their presence. "There

can scarcely be an occasion," says the Preceptor, "when an actor ought to speak with his profile, much less with half his back turned to the audience; for then not only his voice but his features are without effect." Even when the nature of the scene needs that the player should look directly at the person to whom he is speaking, he is still advised to keep "a three-quarter face" to the audience.

Other portions of the Preceptor's discourse are of an obvious sort. He who would personate a hero is told that his carriage must be dignified, his manners graceful, his air gentlemanly and yet "disdainful of the gentility and mere ceremony of good-breeding—immeasurably beyond them." His tones must be varied, while his intelligence, fortitude, and presence of mind must be supreme. The lover should be endowed with all the external charms which are wont to attract and enslave female affection—"a smiling, prepossessing, yet anxious face, beauty of form, elegance of manners, sweetness of voice, passionate eyes, and susceptibility of heart." Clowns are to wear a rustic aspect, to be vacant of expression, with open mouth, raised shoulders, turned-in toes, and a shambling gait, to be slow of conception and utterance, and to be uncouth of manner. Hoydens are to romp and chatter, to over-dress, to be extravagant of action, and to comport them-

selves with an ill-bred air of excessive self-satisfaction. Chambermaids are to be pert and voluble, inquisitive and self-important. The fine lady should not suffer the least vulgarity to appear in her walk, attitudes, dress, or speech. Dress is of so much consequence to her that the moment she appears her character should be evident because of the taste of her attire, her elegant simplicity, and exquisite choice of ornaments. To perfect graces of deportment and charm of manner, smooth enunciation, and flattering but not officious attention to all about her, she is required to add "a continual playfulness, a visible coquetry which though perfectly at her command should appear spontaneous, and an ample mixture of delightful caprice." As to the personation of a gentleman upon the scene, it is said that the requisites for this achievement are many, and the difficulties in the way of it great. "There have been almost as few gentlemen on the stage as heroes," says the Preceptor. Good breeding, so disciplined as to be never off its guard, or, except upon the most extraordinary occasions, betrayed into the discovery of passion; bland gaiety of heart that no trifles can disturb, special charms of address and demeanour, manners that conciliate and gain universal esteem—these are the leading characteristics of the gentlemen of the drama.

Aaron Hill, labouring to reduce the art of acting to as simple a system as possible, maintains that there are but ten dramatic passions—that is, passions that can be distinguished by their outward marks in action: Joy, Grief, Fear, Anger, Pity, Scorn, Hatred, Jealousy, Wonder, and Love. It is the player's task to represent these passions in turn. But he must understand that he cannot duly imitate any passion "until his fancy has conceived so strong an image or idea of it, as to move the same impressive springs within his mind which form that passion when it is undesigned and natural." This Hill avers to be absolutely necessary, the first dramatic principle and the only general rule, the truthful foundation of it "being evident beyond dispute upon examining its effects in the following deduction from their causes." First, the imagination must conceive a strong idea of the passion. Secondly, that idea cannot strongly be conceived without impressing its own form upon the muscles of the face. Thirdly, the look cannot be muscularly stamped upon the face without communicating instantly the same impression to the muscles of the body. Fourthly, the muscles of the body, braced or slack, as the idea is an active or a passive one, must in their natural and not-to-be-avoided consequence, by impelling or retarding the flow of the animal spirits, transmit their own conceived sensation

to the sound of the voice and to the disposition of the gesture. Perhaps all this was clearer to Mr. Hill than it will be found by modern readers. But he strongly advises the players to hold up the mirror not simply to Nature but also to themselves. He who would portray Joy, for instance, is bidden to examine both his face and air in a long upright looking-glass, and until he has done that, he is not to imagine that the impression has been "rightly hit," for in his glass only will he meet with a sure and sincere test of his having "strongly enough or too slackly adapted his fancy to the purpose before him." If his reflection shows a brow bent or clouded, a neck bowed and relaxed, his breast not gracefully thrown back and elate, his arms swinging languidly, "his back-bone reposed or unstraightened, and the joint of his hip, knee, and ancle not strongly braced by the swelling out of the sinews to their full extent," then, by these signs, he shall know himself, and he may be satisfied that he "has too faintly conceived the impression." Should further proof be necessary he has only to speak, raising his voice as high as he pleases, and he will find that in his languid muscular condition he can produce no joyous tones, although the sense of the words he utters may be "all rapture;" in spite of the utmost strain upon his lungs the resulting sounds will be "too sullen or too mournful, and carry

none of the music of sprightliness." But if success has attended his efforts, he will have the pleasure of observing in the glass that "his forehead is opened and raised, his eye smiling and sparkling, his neck stretched and erect, though without stiffness, as if it would add new height to his stature; his breast will be inflated, his back-bone erect, and all the joints of his arm, wrist, fingers, hip, knee, and ancle will be high, strong, and braced boldly." And now if he attempts to speak he is assured that all the spirit of the passion of joy will ascend in his accents, and "the very tone of his voice will seem to out-rapture the meaning" of his speech. The thoughtful actor is enjoined, however, always to remember that he is never to begin to utter even so much as a single word, "till he has first reflected on and felt the idea" of the passion he would depict, and then adapted his look and his nerves to express it. But so soon as this sensation has strongly and fully possessed his fancy, then—and never a moment before—he may attempt to speak. "He will then always hit the right and touching sensibility of tone and move his audience impressively;" whereas should he with an unfeeling volubility of cadence hurry on from one over-leaped distinction to another, without due adaptation of his look and muscles to the meaning proper to the passion, "he will never speak to hearts, nor move himself, nor any of his audience,

beyond the simple and unanimating verbal sense, without the spirit of the writer."

For the further assistance of the actor, Hill ventures upon definitions of the ten dramatic passions: Joy is Pride possessed of Triumph; Grief is Disappointment void of Hope; Fear is Grief discerning and avoiding Danger; Anger is Pride provoked beyond Regard of Caution; Pity is Active Grief for another's Affliction; Scorn is Negligent Anger; Hatred is restrained yet lasting Anger; Jealousy is doubtful Anger struggling against Faith and Pity; Wonder is inquisitive Fear, its first degree is Amazement, its second Astonishment; Love is Desire kept temperate by Reverence. The actor who would portray Love elegantly is exhorted to express Joy combined with Fear. Love is further explained to be a conscious and triumphant swell of Hope intimidated by respectful apprehension of offending where we long to seem agreeable: the exhalation of a soft desire, which, to the warmth inspired by wishes, joins the modesty of a submissive doubtfulness. Indeed, it is protested that Love includes occasionally all other passions, while the Lover comprehends all serious dramatic characters that an actor can expect to shine by. "Let us cease, then, to wonder," adds Hill, "that we can so seldom see it touched upon in the Theatres."

Our Thespian Preceptor also enumerates the chief dramatic passions, and adds an

account of "Humorous Sentiments and Intentions," with a full description of the best means of portraying these. Joy is to be expressed by clapping the hands, by exulting looks—the eyes wide open, and upraised, the countenance smiling, "not composedly, but with features aggravated," the voice rising from time to time to the very highest notes in the scale. The Preceptor is altogether more practical and prosaic than Mr. Hill. Grief is represented by beating the head, tearing the hair, catching the breath, and choking; also by screaming, weeping, stamping, hurrying hither and thither, and lifting the eyes to heaven. "This passion," says the Preceptor, frankly, "admits of a good deal of stage trick; but stage trick, if not well contrived and equally as well executed, frequently fails of the desired effect." Fear opens wide the eyes and mouth, contracts the brows, draws back the elbows, lifts up the hands, the palms open towards the dreaded object as shields opposed to it. The body shrinks and trembles, yet assumes a fighting posture; the heart beats violently, the breath is quick and short, and the voice weak and agitated. Anger expresses itself with "rapidity, interruption, rant, harshness, and trepidation." The neck is outstretched, the head nods and shakes in a menacing manner, the eyes alternately stare and roll, the brows frown, the forehead is wrinkled, the nostrils are dilated,

every muscle is strained. Clenched fists are shaken, the whole body is violently agitated, the open mouth is drawn on each side towards the ear, the teeth gnash, and the feet stamp. Pity, a combination of love and grief, lifts its hands and looks down upon the object of compassion with lowered brows, parted lips, and features drawn together; the voice is frequently interrupted with sighs, and the hand is occasionally employed in wiping the eyes. The actor is warned, however, against over-display of his pocket-handkerchief in the manner of the actresses. Weeping, he is reminded, is effeminate, and may be derogatory to the character he represents. It is admitted, however, that in certain cases even heroes may weep, and weep with honour. Hatred, of which Scorn is a sort of small and mild edition, shrinks back in avoidance of an odious object; the hands are outspread as though to keep it off, the eyes look angrily and asquint, the upper lip curled, the teeth set, the voice loud, the tone chiding, unequal, surly, vehement. Jealousy is restless, peevish, anxious, absent, absorbed. Now it gives way to piteous weeping and complaining; now a gleam of hope that all is well lights up the countenance into a momentary smile. Then gloom clouds the face again, and the mind is overcast with frightful suspicions, horrible imaginings. The arms are folded, the fists clenched, the rolling eyes dart fury. Violent

agitations succeed. The actor may even be required to throw himself upon the ground, previously raising both hands clasped together to denote anguish. This action, the Preceptor observes, will also save him from hurting himself; but he is advised to study falling as being indispensable to theatrical exhibitions. He must fall flat, either on his face or on his side, with his face to the audience; "for it would be ridiculous to see a man who is supposed to be tormented with grief and fury *quietly lie down.*" Wonder opens the eyes, the mouth, the hands; the body is fixed in a contracted stooping posture; the face has the look of fear, but without its wildness; "if the hands hold anything at the time of the appearance of the object of marvel, they immediately let it drop unconscious." Love lights up the face with smiles, smooths and enlarges the forehead, parts the lips, arches the eyebrows. The expression is eager and wistful, but with an air of satisfaction and repose: the eyes languish half-closed; the tone of voice is persuasive, flattering, pathetic, soft, winning, musical, rapturous. The body bends forward; sometimes both the hands are pressed to the bosom. In all suppliant passions, the actor is reminded, kneeling is often necessary; it is sufficient, however, to bend one knee in cases of love, desire, etc., and the bended knee is never to be the knee that is next to the audience!

Corresponding instructions are furnished for the stage portrayal of Approbation, Exhortation, Enquiry, Modesty, Shame, Submission, Pride, Obstinacy, Command, Prohibition, Affirmation, Denial, Concession, Dismissal, Reproof, Condemnation, Menace, Curiosity, Complaint, etc. The actor is taught that Mirth opens wide the mouth, crisps the nose, half closes the eyes, sometimes filling them with tears, shakes and convulses the whole frame, "and, appearing to give some pain, occasions holding the sides;" that the face of Folly wears an habitual, thoughtless grin, or stares wildly with much vacuity of countenance; that Madness rolls the eyes, distorts the features, rushes in and out furiously at every entrance and exit, "and appears all agitation;" that Sloth yawns, dozes, snores, and drawls; that Fatigue exhibits a dejected countenance, with listless limbs, a bowed-down body, and a weakened voice; that Dotage shows itself in the hollowness of its eyes and cheeks, its dimness of sight, deafness, tremulousness of voice, its weak hams, tottering knees, paralytic hands or head, hollow coughing, frequent expectoration, breathless wheezing, occasional groaning, and the stooping of the body under an insupportable load of years. Further, the symptoms of Sickness and Intoxication are fully set forth. The actress is told how to faint, to affect a seemingly sudden deprivation of all

the senses, and to fall apparently lifeless into the arms of some one who, the Preceptor notes, "must be prepared to catch her;" and the actor is informed how to simulate death with the aid of violent distortion, groaning, gasping for breath, stretching the body, raising it, and then letting it fall. "Dying in a chair," says the Preceptor, "as often practised in some characters, is very unnatural, and has little or no effect." Clearly the Preceptor has a preference for "violent ends"—so far as the stage is concerned.

For the further edification of the student the Preceptor adds a variety of speeches and selections typical of the several dramatic passions in tragedy or serious drama, and especially recommends that these lessons from the most approved authors should be used in schools and apportioned to the pupils, and that at least one day in the week should be appropriated to the practice of oratory. Thus he would illustrate Joy by a speech from Otway's 'Orphan;' Fear, Agitation, and Terror by passages from 'The Castle Spectre' of "Monk" Lewis; Pride and Wonder mixed with Pity by a scene from 'The Iron Chest' of Colman; Parental Love by selections from 'John Bull'—and so on. In conclusion, advice is given on the delivery of Soliloquies, Addresses, Prologues, and Epilogues, when the actor directs his discourse to the audience in general, or to boxes, pit, and

galleries severally and particularly. The chief requisites for prologue-speaking are defined to be distinct articulation, easy action, and a modest demeanour. A retentive memory is insisted upon as absolutely necessary to render the delivery graceful and to give the lines their due point. And the speaker is advised to learn his speech thoroughly, and not to trust too much to the prompter or to any "mean subterfuge," such as finding his cue from a paper concealed in his hat, etc. The actor is reminded that upon these occasions, as a rule, he appears in his own character, though sometimes upon "the whim of the poet" he may be required to represent a sailor, a countryman, a lawyer, a Quaker, etc., and to assume the aspect, dress and manners of such characters. Still he must address himself directly to the audience. In serious recitations the speaker is advised that he must be grave both of costume and air, and he is reminded that "the late Mr. Palmer"—the original Joseph Surface—when he delivered Gray's Elegy from the stage was wont to be "discovered, in a suit of black, meditating in a churchyard."

There have been later "Guides to the Stage" and "Handbooks of Acting," but on the whole, perhaps, the instructions of the "Thespian Preceptor" have not been much bettered if counsel of a more minute and technical character has been now and then

tendered the incipient player. One authority, for instance, lays stress upon the arts to be employed in "making up" the countenance for theatrical purposes. The importance of rouge is set forth, with the manner of applying it by means of a hare's foot. It should not be too manifest, yet "it should be placed well under the eyes, to impart to them a brilliant sparkling appearance." Pearl-powder is also recommended to whiten the forehead, neck, arms, and hands. The facetious uses of rouge are also dwelt upon. "If a comic face be wanted, the rouge should be placed on the tip of the nose or down it in a streak, also laid on the cheekbones or across the forehead. This, however, must not be overdone." There must be reason even in rouging. The actor is then advised that when he would remove paint from his cuticle, he should not attempt to wash it off, but should simply smear cold cream over his face; afterwards with a dry towel he will be able to wipe off cold cream and colour both. He is then told how to impart to youth the aspect of age, with the help of sepia or Indian-ink and a camel's-hair brush. The lines running down the nose, the furrows across the forehead, the crow's-feet about the eyes, and the lines round the mouth and chin, are to be deepened and defined by the paint-brush. White and sepia are to be employed when a sick or emaciated appearance is thought

necessary, and when a "bald wig" is assumed the better to portray age, care is to be taken to colour the natural skin of the forehead to match the hue of the artificial skin or canvas scalp of the wig. But it would be, perhaps, easy to over-estimate the worth of suggestions and admonitions of this kind, which certainly may be thought to descend too much to trivialities and minutiæ.

The furious Tybalt was accused of fighting "by the book of arithmetic." However, he succeeded in worsting Mercutio, although he subsequently fell a victim to the superior fencing of Romeo, when that enraged youth flung away "respective lenity," and ruled his conduct only by "fire-eyed fury." But can the actor's art be learnt from books? Can it be taught at all? Are such works as the Thespian Preceptor of much service to the aspirant? Something, no doubt, he may gather from Conservatoires and from Colleges of Dramatic Art; yet, after all, his success must depend as much upon what he takes with him to school as upon what he there acquires. The actor's best instructors are his own observation, individual study, industry, and practice. Lloyd writes:

> He who in earnest studies o'er his part
> Will find true nature cling about his heart;
> The modes of grief are not included all
> In the white handkerchief and mournful drawl;
> A single look more marks the internal woe,
> Than all the windings of the lengthened Oh!

Up to the face the quick sensation flies,
And darts its meaning from the speaking eyes:
Love, Transport, Madness, Anger, Scorn, Despair,
And all the passions, all the soul is there.

In conclusion, he descants eloquently upon the evanescent nature of the player's triumph:

Yet, hapless Artist! though thy skill can raise
The bursting peal of universal praise,
Though at thy back Applause delighted stands,
And lifts, Briareus-like, her hundred hands:
Know, Fame awards thee but a partial breath,
Not all thy talents brave the stroke of death.
Poets to ages yet unborn appeal,
And latest times the Eternal Nature feel.
Though blended here the praise of bard and player,
While more than half becomes the Actor's share,
Relentless Death untwists the mingled fame,
And sinks the Player in the Poet's name.
The pliant muscles of the various face,
The mien that gave each sentence strength and grace
The tuneful voice, the eye that spoke the mind,
Are gone, nor leave a single trace behind.

CHAPTER II.

"INEXPLICABLE DUMB-SHOWS."

HAMLET treats scornfully "the groundlings," the pit of the Elizabethan period, when he describes them as "for the most part capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise." The old dramatists, indeed, were very prone to despise the playgoers occupying the pit, calling them now "understanding grounded men," and now "fools," or "scarecrows in the yard." The term *yard*, however, was peculiar to the public theatres, and related to the old system of performing in the enclosed yards of inns; the word *pit* applied only to the private theatres, roofed and furnished with seats, presenting entertainments of a more refined sort, and claiming the patronage of the superior classes.

Dumb-shows were generally supposed to prefigure the events about to be presented upon the scene, and had long been among the established customs of the theatre. Before each act of the play to be performed, the *dramatis personæ* came forward, and by

means of eloquent gestures, postures, and glances typified the transactions in which they were about to engage. In his 'History of English Poetry,' Warton has expressed his surprise that this "ostensible comment of the dumb-show" does not regularly appear in the tragedies of Shakespeare; while other critics have held that, because it is never formally described at the close or commencement of his acts, dumb-show was never introduced in the performance of his plays. It may be gathered from Hamlet's speech that, with the groundlings at any rate, dumb-shows were certainly popular; and, as Warton writes, Shakespeare's aim was to collect an audience, and for this purpose all the common expedients were necessary. No dramatic writer of his age has more battles or ghosts. His representations abound with the "useful appendages of mechanical terror," and he adopts "all the superstitions of the theatre." And it is concluded that if he dispensed with the aid of dumb-shows it was because he would not be entangled by the formality, or because he saw through the futility, of such unnatural and extrinsic ornaments. "It was not by declamation or by pantomime that Shakespeare was to fix his eternal dominion over the hearts of mankind."

Dumb-shows were not, of course, intended to be "inexplicable;" they were assuredly designed for the enlightenment of the specta-

tors. But no doubt they were often of an obscure and mysterious character, and they gratified in that they were simply exhibitions of emblematic pageantry. Nor were they absolutely confined to the foreshadowing of coming events; they sometimes served, we are told, "as a compendious introduction of such circumstances as could not commodiously be comprehended within the bounds of representation." They "supplied deficiencies, and covered the want of business." And occasionally they were employed to stop the breaches of the strict laws of dramatic composition, to remedy neglect of the unities of time and place. Our early dramatists were not wont to be heedful of classical prescriptions in that regard, and dumb-shows occupied the scene, "while a hero was expected from the Holy Land, or a princess was imported, married, and brought to bed." The dumb-show preceding the fourth act of Lord Buckhurst's 'Gordobuc,' the first specimen in our language of a regular tragedy—an heroic story, written in blank verse, and divided into acts and scenes—takes almost the form of a distinct masque. First the music of hautboys is heard, then there come forth from beneath the stage, "as though out of hell," three Furies, Alecto, Megera, and Ctesiphone, clad in black garments, sprinkled with blood and flames; their bodies girt with snakes, their heads "spread with serpents instead of

hair;" the one bearing in her hand a snake, the other a whip, and the third a burning fire-brand; each driving on a king and a queen, "which, moved by Furies, unnaturally had slain their own children;" the names of these kings and queens being Tantalus, Medea, Athamas, Ino, Cambises, and Althea. The stage direction proceeds: "After that the Furies and these had passed about the stage thrice, they departed, and then the music ceased. Hereby was signified the unnatural murders to follow, that is to say: Porrex slain by his own mother, and King Gordobuc and Queen Viden killed by their own subjects." Warton points out a resemblance between this "visionary procession of kings and queens long since dead" and the train of royal spectres in the tent scene of Shakespeare's 'Richard the Third.'

The dumb-show preceding the fifth act of 'Gordobuc' is curious for its anachronistic character. The events of the story are supposed to occur six hundred years before Christ; nevertheless, firearms are brought upon the scene and freely employed. The stage direction runs: "First the drums and flutes begin to sound, during which there come forth upon the stage a company of hargabusiers and of armed men all in order of battle. These, after their pieces discharged and that the armed men had three times marched about the stage, departed, and then

the drums and flutes did cease. Hereby was signified tumults, rebellions, arms and civil wars, as fell in the realm of Great Britain, which, by the space of fifty years and more, continued in civil war between the nobility after the death of King Gordobuc, and of his issue," &c. However, the period of the story of Hamlet, so far as it can be assigned to any precise period, did not preclude Shakespeare from introducing "a peal of ordnance," and referring to a "petard." In 'Gordobuc,' the employment of music as an aid to the dumb-show is worth noting. The first act is preceded by "music of violence;" before the second act "music of cornets" is sounded; and before the third, "music of flutes." The dumb-show may be considered as performing in part the functions of the chorus of the ancient drama. In addition to its dumb-show, however, 'Gordobuc' is supplied with a chorus of "four ancient and sage men of Britain," who at the close of each act point the moral of its incidents, comment upon the proceedings of the characters, and express reprobation or sympathy as the case may seem to require.

If no directions as to dumb-shows appear in Shakespeare's tragedies, the poet has yet been careful to preserve this old custom of the stage when a theatrical exhibition formed part of his subject, as in 'Hamlet' and 'A Midsummer Night's Dream.' The "tedious

brief scene of young Pyramus and his love Thisbe," presented for the entertainment of Duke Theseus and his bride, is preceded by a prologue delivered by a fellow, who, as Theseus says, "doth not stand upon points." Pyramus and Thisbe, Wall, Moonshine and Lion, are then instructed to enter "as in dumb-show." There is no direction, however, as to the method of this show, nor does it appear that the performers by their actions anticipated the distresses of their tragedy. It is, perhaps, part of the humour of their dumb-show that they show nothing. In the prologue it is stated:

> The actors are at hand, and by their show,
> You shall know all that you are like to know.

After they have entered they stand mute while the "prologuiser" resumes his discourse, introducing them severally, naming them, and describing the deeds they are about to do. His speech concluded, the mirthful tragedy is formally commenced.

In 'Hamlet' the dumb-show precedes the prologue to the 'Murder of Gonzago.' "Hautboys play," so the folios direct; in the quartos the words are, "the trumpets sound;" then comes the dumb-show. "Enter a king and queen very lovingly; the queen embracing him and he her. She kneels and makes show of protestation unto him. He takes her up and declines his head upon her neck;

lays him down upon a bank of flowers; she, seeing him asleep, leaves him. Anon comes in a fellow, takes off his crown, kisses it, and pours poison in the king's ear, and exit. The queen returns; finds the king dead, and makes passionate action. The poisoner, with some two or three mutes, comes in again, seeming to lament with her. The dead body is carried away. The poisoner wooes the queen with gifts; she seems loth and unwilling awhile, but in the end accepts his love." This dumb-show, it need hardly be said, has not been preserved upon the modern stage, nor has its revival ever been urged by even the most resolute sticklers for textual performance. The actors so curiously described as mutes, all being mute for the occasion, were no doubt supernumeraries, who were not entrusted with speech even in the tragedy itself.

It may be thought that this dumb-show, so clearly described, would have proved explicable enough to the spectators, or that they would at any rate have obtained from it some inkling of the nature of the exhibition to follow. But they remained wholly in the dark. Ophelia vaguely asks what the dumb-show means? And to Hamlet's reply that it "means mischief," she adds an innocent surmise that possibly it may "import the argument of the play." Then the prologuiser enters. "We shall know by this fellow," says

Hamlet. The prologue, however, consists of but three lines. It is not until the play is fairly in progress that Claudius and Gertrude manifest any uneasiness. But the queen begins to think that the lady doth protest too much; and the king adds an inquiry touching the argument—"Is there no offence in it?" Clearly he had gathered little from the dumb-show, or, conjecturing with Ophelia that it imported the argument, had nevertheless failed to grasp its meaning.

If dumb-shows were inexplicable to the groundlings, they were yet something to look at. The actors in their stage dresses formed groups and fell into attitudes, and no doubt grimaced a good deal, and when companies of "hargabusiers" discharged their firearms upon the stage there must certainly have been noise enough. To the poorer classes of playgoers, unprovided with seats, and standing for some hours in a damp, unroofed inn-yard, this practical sort of entertainment was no doubt more attractive than the divinest flight of poetry. But dumb-shows as a portion of the performances of the superior theatres were probably declining in Shakespeare's time, although they may long have survived in representations of strolling companies. Indeed, some connection may have existed between the dumb-shows of Elizabeth's time, and those "parades" of the entire company, variously dressed for performance, which were

wont to occur upon the exterior platforms of such péripatetic theatres as Gyngell's or Richardson's while the gong sounded and the manager through a speaking-trumpet informed the public that the performance was just "going to begin."

On the French stage our old English dumb-show had no exact counterpart; but curious mingling of the spoken and the mute drama distinguished the *comédie-ballet* of Molière, for instance. Comedy in France has been from time to time subject to adulteration, now with singing, the result being *comédie-vaudeville*, and now with dancing as in *comédie-ballet*. The Duchesse du Maine, celebrated for those *Nuits de Sceaux*, or *Nuits Blanches*, which Louis XIV.'s nobles found so delightful, is said to have invented the dramatic ballet or *ballet d'action*, and the success enjoyed by this form of entertainment may have led to much tacking on of dances to works that did not really need such additions. Between each act of 'Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme,' ballets are introduced so far connected with the story that the dancers are now the tailors and now the cooks of M. Jourdain, and now the Turks and dervishes who have taken part in mystifying him. In these *intermèdes* the tailors "se réjouissent, en dansant, de la libéralité de M. Jourdain;" the cooks conclude their dance by carrying on a table "couverte de plusieurs mets," to be

of service in the next act of the play, so that the ballets after a fashion assisted the conduct of the story. The *intermède* following the first act of 'Le Malade Imaginaire,' however, seems altogether irrelevant to the drama, and is to be ascribed to the popularity of Italian pantomime. Polichinelle is introduced, to sing a serenade to an old woman at a window, to be disturbed by a band of violins, to be beaten by a troop of archers, who finally execute a joyful dance; nor is the story much assisted by the second *intermède*, songs and dances by Egyptians and Moors, the entertainment being provided for the diversion of Argan by his brother Béralde. "Je vous amène ici un divertissement que j'ai rencontré, qui dissipera votre chagrin, et vous rendra l'âme mieux disposée aux choses que nous avons à dire. Ce sont des Égyptiens vêtus en Mores, qui font des danses mêlées de chansons, où je suis sûr que vous prendrez plaisir; et cela vaudra bien une ordonnance de M. Purgon. Allons!" The third *intermède* is described as "une cérémonie burlesque d'un homme qu'on fait médecin, en récit, chant et danse." The stage is crowded with physicians, surgeons and apothecaries, who examine the candidate, admit him to their ranks, march to and fro in procession, and sing and dance to the accompaniment of musical instruments, the clapping of hands, and the tinkling and clanging of pestles and

mortars. It was while playing in this last *intèrmède*, on the fourth representation of 'Le Malade Imaginaire,' that Molière was attacked by the convulsive fit which terminated fatally an hour after his removal from the theatre. He had been ailing for some time previous, and an effort had been made to dissuade him from appearing. "C'est impossible," he said; "il y a cinquante pauvres ouvriers qui n'ont que leur journée pour vivre; que feront-ils si je ne joue pas?"

Singing and dancing were, no doubt, more prominent ingredients than dumb-show in the constitution of these *intermèdes*, which must assuredly have overpowered considerably the interest of the dramas they were supposed to embellish. But the fashion of the time demanded that the glories of Louis le Grand should be hymned, and that Flora, Zephyr and Pan, Daphnis and Daphne, and flocks of Dresden-china-looking shepherds and shepherdesses should occupy the scene for some time before discussion could be permitted even of such prosaic subjects as the hypochondriacism of Argan, or the follies and misadventures of Monsieur de Pourceaugnac; and that further interruption of a fantastic kind should occur at every pause in the performance, to occupy the spectators between the acts and prevent any cessation of amusement. In Molière's *comédie-ballet* in five acts, 'Les Amans Magnifiqués,' Louis

XIV. himself took part, appearing as Neptune in the first *intermède*, and as the Sun in the last, singing and dancing, playing now the flute and now the guitar, attended by heralds, trumpeters, priests, priestesses, Pythians, Tritons, Waves, Cupids, nymphs, dryads, fauns and satyrs. The king, indeed, greatly prided himself upon his histrionic abilities; he had quite a repertory of parts, and gave himself all the airs of a popular comedian in the way of bidding adieu to the stage only to return to it again at an early opportunity. 'Les Amans Magnifiques,' a very splendid spectacle enriched with music by Lulli, was first played at St. Germain in 1670. The second *intermède*, which follows the first act—for the play begins after an odd fashion with an *intermède*—is thus described: "La confidente de la jeune princesse lui produit trois danseurs sous le nom de *pantomimes*, c'est-à-dire qui expriment par leurs gestes toutes sortes de chose. La princesse les voit danser, et les reçoit à son service." In another *intermède* the confidant begs that these mimes may reappear, so that by their skill in expressing the passions they may relieve the distresses of the princess. Eriphile gives a sad sort of consent. "Let them do what they will," she says, "provided they leave me to my own thoughts." Thereupon the four pantomimists enter and "pour épreuver de leur adresse, ajustent leurs gestes

et leurs pas aux inquiétudes de la jeune princesse Ériphile." Certainly there is something arbitrary about the manner of introducing these pantomimists: the excuse for their presence in the play is scarcely sufficient. But the precedent thus furnished has been followed in innumerable dramas of which dancing and pantomime formed part. It may be remembered that Nicholas Nickleby, being new to the business, was perplexed how to introduce into his adaptation from the French a ballet for the Infant Phenomenon and Mr. Lenville. "There's nothing easier than that," observed Mr. Lenville, who was cast for the part of an attached and faithful servant in attendance upon an ill-treated wife (Mrs. Crummles) and her daughter (the Infant Phenomenon), and compelled to seek refuge with them in poor lodgings. And he advises that the lady, overcome by the misery of her position, should sink into a chair in the poor lodgings and bury her face in her pocket-handkerchief. The child and the faithful servant are then to ask the cause of her tears with a view to raising her spirits. "Oh, Pierre!" says the distressed lady, "would that I could shake off these painful thoughts." "Try, ma'am, try," says the faithful servant; "rouse yourself, ma'am—be amused." "I will," says the lady; "I will learn to suffer with fortitude. Do you remember that dance, my honest friend, which in happier days you

practised with this sweet angel? It never failed to calm my spirits then. Oh! let me see it once again before I die!" "There it is," Mr. Lenville instructs Nicholas. "Cue for the band, *before I die*—and off they go. That's the regular thing."

Molière borrowed freely from the Italian theatre, and gradually certain of the conventional characters of Italian comedy became, as it were, acclimatised upon the French stage. As Mascarille in 'L'Étourdi,' an imitation of 'L'Inavvertito' by Nicolas Barbieri, Molière for some time followed Italian custom and wore a mask. Our harlequins appear masked, and a dramatic critic, writing in 1811, notes that Grimaldi as the clown, both in the pantomimes of Mother Goose and Asmodeus, used the mask "more frequently than we recollect to have seen it used by any preceding performer: recurring in some sort to the mode of the ancient drama." But the characters of our English pantomime have altogether outgrown such likeness as they may at one time have presented to their southern originals or progenitors. And, transferred to France, the Italian creations gradually underwent a change. In the 'Mémoires Secrets de Bachaumont' it is recorded of a new Arlequin appearing at the Théâtre Italien in 1767, that he had "trop conservé du jeu de sa patrie: il est balourd, niais et sot, et nous exigeons ici beaucoup de finesse dans le

jeu, de souplesse dans le geste, de légèreté dans les attitudes, de gentillesse dans toute l'action, de saillies naïves dans le dialogue, de talents, même accessoires, pour amuser." The performers of Italian pantomime, while employing extraordinary arts of gesticulation, were not forbidden to speak: their extempore dialogue afforded great entertainment. Our actors were for some time limited to dumb-show, almost by act of Parliament. Speech unaccompanied by music—when it might be legalised as singing—was an infringement of the privileges enjoyed by the patent theatres, and subject to heavy punishment. The unfortunate clown who was sent to prison for uttering the words "roast beef," without orchestral support, in a pantomime at the East London Theatre in 1787, has become a memorable figure in stage history. Isaac Disraeli refers to this period when he speaks of the singular perfection to which he had seen "silent pantomimical language" carried by John Palmer the actor, the original Joseph Surface, who "after building a theatre was prohibited the use of his voice by the magistrates. It was then," writes Disraeli, "he powerfully affected the audience by the eloquence of his action in the tragic pantomime of 'Don Juan,'" founded of course upon 'Le Festin de Pierre' of Molière.

Dumb-show had long lost its old position in England as an aid or concomitant of the

regular drama; it had maintained, however, a separate existence, and occasionally thrived greatly in connection with dancing and subsequently with melodrama. To Sir William Davenant has been ascribed the first introduction of entertainments of dancing and singing "to check the superiority enjoyed by the royal comedians in their exhibition of the regular drama;" and in that first pantomime founded upon the fable of Mars and Venus, which led the way to more costly and ambitious productions of the kind, dumb-show, or what Cibber calls "a mute narrative of gesture only," figured prominently, with dances in character, and set forth the subject so intelligibly "that even thinking spectators allowed it to be both a pleasant and a rational entertainment." In later times dumb-show formed an alliance with melodrama. The early examples of that class of entertainment almost invariably provided employment for mute performers. Genest, in his 'History of the Stage,' referring to the 'Tale of Mystery' produced at Covent Garden in 1802, describes the work as "the first and best of those melodramas with which the stage was afterwards inundated;" hastening to reprobate melodrama, however, as "an unjustifiable species of the drama, a mixture of dialogue and dumb-show accompanied by music." The names of certain early melodramas: 'The Dumb Girl of Genoa,' 'The Dumb Savoyard

and his Monkey,' the Dumb Man of Manchester,' to enumerate no more, exemplify sufficiently the dependence placed upon pantomimic skill and the language of gesture. Pantomimes, both serious and comic, had long been popular entertainments at the small suburban theatres and public gardens, which seem to have been carried on with or without the permission of the authorities. Thus in 1735 a certain Mr. Forcer, who had become proprietor of Sadler's Wells, petitioned Parliament for a license, representing that "the place had been used for music, rope-dancing, a short pantomime, and the sale of liquor for forty years before;" the amusements and attractions specified were in such wise referred back to the year 1695. His application was of no avail, nor did better fortune attend the petition of a later proprietor who avowed that there had been a place of public entertainment on the site of Sadler's Wells even in Queen Elizabeth's time.

Upon the French stage a certain Mademoiselle Prévost is said to have been the first dancer who ever appeared in ballet-pantomimes. She was assisted by a male dancer, Balon, distinguished for his skill as a mimic. These artistes of the opera interpreted, by means of looks and movements, the last act of Corneille's 'Horace,' the music being supplied by Jean Joseph Mouret. The effect of their performance has been described as

prodigious: "les acteurs sur le théâtre, les illustres spectateurs dans la salle, tout le monde pleurait." Mademoiselle Prévost, however, was soon eclipsed by that more famous dancer, Mademoiselle Marie Anne Cupis de Camargo, the reputed descendant of a noble Spanish house, who first appeared at the Opera in 1726. Dancing and dumb-show became permanently established among the entertainments of the opera house. The greatest composers thought it no condescension to write dance music; no opera could probably be called *grand* that did not provide for the introduction of the dancers and the pantomimists. In certain works, such as the 'Robert' of Meyerbeer, and the 'Masaniello' and 'Le Dieu et La Bayadère' of Auber, special care was taken to provide a mute part of importance for the *première danseuse* of the day, who appeared as the rival of the *prima donna*, the one winning applause for her silence, the other for her song. Ballet did not exist, however, merely as an adjunct of opera, but often stood alone constituting the chief attraction of the night. No subject was too profound or too elaborate to be dealt with by the dancers; ballets were produced in many acts and occupying the whole evening in representation. Signor Carlo Blasis of Milan, for many years chief ballet-master at the opera houses of Italy, France, and England, prided himself upon the fact that he was the

first to convert sacred and biblical subjects into ballet-pantomimes. He counted among his best successes his ballets of 'Susanna,' 'Giuditta,' 'Giuseppe,' and 'Il Paradiso Perduto.' He was considered a promoter of "the imaginary or Shakespearean class of ballets," and founded one of his productions upon the 'Faust' of Goethe. He contrived in all some eighty grand ballets, classifying them as epic, historic, mythologic, Anacreontic, biblical oriental, poetic, pastoral, comic, &c. 'The Siege of Troy,' 'Christopher Columbus,' 'Cyrus,' 'Mokanna,' 'Tasso,' 'Don Quixote,' 'Midsummer Night's Dream,' 'Figaro,' 'The Gamester,' 'Lord Byron at Venice,' are among the titles of his most successful achievements. He was certainly an enthusiast, and wrote eloquently upon his art. He recommended the composer of ballets to concentrate upon himself "all those rays of light which a general knowledge of the fine arts spreads over the mind;" satisfied that by such means his work will acquire a delightful hue and tone of colouring and an irresistible charm. "Pantomime," he wrote, "can assume any shape and express every passion; it is a very Proteus, and may be compared to the genius of an Ariosto or a Shakespeare. In the highest and most noble style of dancing are to be found the contours and attitudes observable in the productions of Raphael, Correggio, Guido, Caracci and Albano; every motion,

step, and change of feature should convey some idea, sensation, or passion."

While dumb-show of these poetic pretensions thus flourished at the opera houses, a humbler school of pantomime found sufficient patronage in theatres forbidden by law to present the more regular drama. Before free trade in theatric exhibitions was established in Paris, a little theatre on the Boulevard du Temple was exclusively devoted to the performance of the funambulists. Here the feats of Paillasse and Pierrot were to be seen in perfection, and here, too, it is said the genius of the great Frédéric Lemaître first asserted itself. Jealous managers, indeed, decided that so fine an actor could not fairly be classed as a funambulist, and at last compelled him to transfer his services to the Porte St. Martin. For the Minister of the Interior was induced to issue an advertisement to the effect that every performer at the Funambules must before appearing there in a dramatic character prove himself or herself a true funambulist by dancing on the tight rope. Lemaître had fought broad-sword combats and otherwise secured distinction as a member of the troop directed by Madame Saqui, the famous rope-dancer; but Frédéric could not himself appear upon the rope, and his career as a funambulist closed. The glories of the little theatre in question have been celebrated by Théophile Gautier in

an interesting and ingenious essay entitled "Shakespeare aux Funambules," the poet-critic having persuaded himself that the dumb-show and antics of Pierrot and his colleagues were inspired by a genuine Shakespearean spirit. He described at length a ballet-pantomime of the adventures of Pierrot in his attempt to obtain a new suit of clothes that he might the more decorously appear before a duchess with whom he is in love. Acting upon a sudden impulse, he murders the dealer in clothes, whose ghost haunts him afterwards in a most terrible manner throughout the remainder of the play. There is little, perhaps, in this that has not figured in many pantomimes of British growth; but the method of representation may have been altogether exceptional. M. Gautier urged by an enthusiastic and exuberant fancy, finds in these adventures of Pierrot with the tailor's ghost resemblances to the tragedies of 'Macbeth' and 'Hamlet,' and maintains that the curious drama of the Funambules, "mêlé de rire et de terreur, . . . renferme un mythe très profond, très complet, et d'une haute moralité, qui ne demanderait que d'être formulé en sanscrit, pour faire éclore des nuées de commentaires. Pierrot," he continues, "qui se promène dans la rue avec sa casaque blanche, son pantalon blanc, son visage enfariné, préoccupé de vagues désirs, n'est-ce pas la symbolisation de l'âme humaine

encore innocente et blanche, tourmentée d'aspirations infinies vers les régions supérieures?" Perhaps we may reply with Horatio, "'Twere to consider too curiously to consider so."

It may be noted that Pierrot, the French clown, has not thriven in England, although our Christmas clown might be viewed as a modification of his Gallican rival—a Pierrot with coloured patches sewn upon his white dress. Still, no close resemblance exists between these two clowns. More than thirty years ago Paul Legrand, a famous Pierrot, possibly the very Pierrot who moved Gautier to so much amazement and delight, fulfilled an engagement in London at the Adelphi Theatre; but his efforts failed to satisfy the spectators. He departed too widely from the conventions of British harlequinade; his humour was not the humour our public had been accustomed to. He returned here in 1872, an old actor of "utility," attached to a French company visiting London, and afforded glimpses now and then of his peculiar art. In a vaudeville called 'En Classe, Mesdemoiselles,' he assumed for a while the character of a vivandier, depicting by "dumb motions" the incidents of a battle, from the first attack to the succour of the wounded upon the field. The performance was surprising in its vivid picturesqueness and suggestive force, and the exertions of the

pantomimist were rewarded with prolonged applause.

But pantomime, however significant to some, always remains inexplicable to others; the language of gesture addresses itself vainly to unperceiving eyes. The late Examiner of Plays, Mr. Donne, before a parliamentary committee gave evidence of the difficulties he experienced in his endeavours to interpret ballet and pantomime, and expressed his opinion that to very many people the matter was as obscure as it was to him. "A ballet is rarely understood," he said, "by more than about four people: the author of the ballet, and the master of the ballet, the first dancer, and the *première danseuse*." To certain close observers, however, dumb-show has seemed much more intelligible, a conventional system easily comprehended. There is humorous mention of the subject in one of the letters of Charles Dickens. Miss Kelly's Theatre, now called the Royalty, in Dean Street, Soho, had been the scene of the rehearsals of Ben Jonson's 'Every Man in his Humour,' and Beaumont and Fletcher's 'Elder Brother,' the characters being sustained by the novelist and his friends. A little girl, apparently attached to the theatre, had been noticed flitting about among the amateurs so silently that she might have been deaf and dumb but for sudden small shrieks and starts forced from her by the marvels in progress about

her; thereupon Dickens bestowed upon her the name of Fireworks. Presently he wrote, "What a mass of absurdity must be shut up sometimes within the walls of that small theatre in Dean Street! Fireworks will come out shortly, depend upon it, in the dumb line, and will relate her history in profoundly unintelligible motions, that will be translated into long and complicated descriptions by a grey-bearded father and a red-wigged countryman, his son. You remember the dumb dodge of relating an escape from captivity? Clasping the left wrist with the right hand, and the right wrist with the left hand, alternately, to express chains, and then going round and round the stage very fast, and coming hand-over-hand down an imaginary cord, at the end of which there is one stroke on the drum and a kneeling to the chandelier! If Fireworks can't do that, and won't, somewhere, I'm a Dutchman." Information has not been supplied as to the fulfilment or the non-fulfilment of this prophecy. It may be noted that Dickens had probably in mind the dumb-show indulged in by Fenella, the heroine of 'La Muette de Portici,' when she would explain to her brother Masaniello the circumstances of her escape from prison.

Grand ballets, such as Signor Blasis delighted in, have ceased to appear. The art of dumb-show declines more and more, and it

threatens to depart altogether from our stage. Christmas pantomimes are pantomimes only in name; they are almost as dull and wordy now-a-days as five-act tragedies. But a year or two since was recorded the death of Mr. W. H. Payne, the hero for half a century of innumerable ballets and pantomimes. He has left no successor; almost it may be said that he has carried away his art with him; and playgoers of to-day's date seem scarcely conscious that they have sustained a loss. Yet dumb-show had its uses and was worth preserving. Grace and expressiveness of pose and action should count for something in considering an actor's qualities. That he had attitudinised and danced as harlequin probably contributed to the elegance and alertness, even the eloquence and passion, of Edmund Kean's Hamlet and Othello.

CHAPTER III.

"SUIT THE ACTION TO THE WORD."

WHEN Hamlet told the tragedians of the city that they should suit the action to the word, the word to the action, he seemed to be affording them advice that was at once both sound and simple; yet to effectively combine speech with movement or gesture so that they may "go hand in hand, not one before another," constitutes one of the greatest difficulties of histrionic art. What kind of action is suited to particular words? How much or how little action is permissible? What words are to be accompanied or illustrated by action, and what words may be left to run alone, as it were, and take care of themselves? These are the questions the performer is required to answer for himself. Hamlet can but proffer counsel of a general sort. The modesty of nature is not to be overstepped; the actors are not to mouth their speeches, nor to saw the air too much with their hands; in the very torrent, tempest, and even whirlwind of their passion, they are to acquire and

beget a temperance that may give it smoothness. Yet they are not to be too tame; their own discretion is to be their tutor; the purpose and end of playing being to hold the mirror up to nature, &c. : There is danger alike in overdoing and in coming tardy off; in either case the unskilful may be made to laugh, but the judicious will be made to grieve, the "censure of which one" is in the allowance of the players to "overweigh a whole theatre of others."

It is probable that the judicious have been more often made to grieve by overdoing and redundancy of action than by tameness and tardiness of histrionic method. In one of his letters Macready has narrated how his own early manner was marred by excess and exaggeration, and he became sensible of his errors of this kind. His observation of actual life suggested misgivings; he noted how sparingly and therefore how effectively Mrs. Siddons had recourse to gesticulation; a line in Dante taught him the value and dignity of repose; and a theory took form in his mind, presently to obtain practical demonstration of its correctness when he saw Talma act, "whose every movement was a change of subject for the sculptor's or the painter's study." Macready had been taught to imitate in gesture the action he might be relating, or "to figure out some idea of the images of his speech." A chapter in 'Peregrine Pickle' descriptive of

Quin's acting as Zanga in 'The Revenge' convinced him of the absurdity of accompanying narration by elaborate gesticulation; he applied the criticism to himself in various situations which might have tempted him to like extravagance. Peregrine is supposed to complain of Quin's Zanga as out-Herodingˇ Herod, especially in the scene of the Moor's relating to Isabella how Alonzo's jealousy had been inflamed by the discovery of a letter designedly placed in his path. It seemed to Peregrine that Mr. Quin's action intimately resembled the ridiculous grimacing of a monkey when he delivered Zanga's speech regarding the letter:

> He took it up;
> But scarce was it unfolded to his sight
> When he, as if an arrow pierced his eye,
> Started, and trembling dropped it on the ground.

In pronouncing the first two words the actor was said to stoop down and seem to take up something from the stage; he then mimicked the manner of unfolding a letter, and arriving at the simile of an arrow piercing the eye he darted his forefinger towards that organ. At the word "started" he recoiled with great violence, and when he came to "trembling dropped it on the ground," he threw all his limbs into a tremulous emotion and shook the imaginary paper from his hand. The same system of minute gesticulation accompanied further portions of the speech. At the words:

> Pale and aghast awhile my victim stood,
> Disguised a sigh or two and puffed them from him;
> Then rubbed his brow and took it up again,

the player's countenance assumed a wild stare, he sighed thrice most piteously as though he were on the point of suffocation, he scrubbed his forehead, and, bending his body, aped the action of snatching an object from the floor. He continued:

> At first he looked as if he meant to read it;
> But, checked by rising fears, he crushed it thus,
> And thrust it, like an adder, in his bosom.

Here the performer imitated the confusion and concern of Alonzo, seemed to cast his eyes upon something from which they were immediately withdrawn with horror and precipitation; then, "shutting his fist with a violent squeeze, as if he intended to make immediate application to Isabella's nose," he rammed it into his own bosom with all the horror and agitation of a thief taken in the act. Mr. Pickle in his character of dramatic critic concludes: "Were the player debarred the use of speech and obliged to act to the eyes only of the audience, this mimicry might be a necessary conveyance of his meaning; but when he is at liberty to signify his ideas by language, nothing can be more trivial, forced, unnatural, and antic than his superfluous mummery. Not that I would exclude from the representation the graces of action, without which the choicest sentiments clothed in the

most exquisite expression would appear unanimated and insipid; but these are as different from this ridiculous burlesque as is the demeanour of a Tully in the rostrum from the tricks of a Jack-pudding on a mountebank's stage."

Convinced that his method was founded upon wrong principles, Macready describes the means he adopted to coerce his limbs to perfect stillness the while he exhibited "the wildest emotions of passion." He would lie on the floor or stand straight against a wall or tie bandages about his arms, and while so pinioned or restricted, he would recite the most violent passages of Othello, Lear, Hamlet, Macbeth, or whatever would require most energy and emotion; he would speak the most passionate bursts of rage "under the supposed constraint of whispering them in the ear of him or her to whom they were addressed," thus keeping both voice and gesture in subjection to the real impulse of the feeling. "I was obliged also," he writes, "to have frequent recourse to the looking-glass, and had two or three large ones in my room to reflect to myself each view of the posture I might have fallen into, besides being under the necessity of acting the passion close to a glass to restrain the tendency to exaggerate its expression, which was the most difficult of all, to repress the ready frown, and keep the features, perhaps I should say the muscles of the face, undisturbed, while intense passion

should speak from the eye alone. The easier an actor makes his art appear, the greater must have been the pains it cost him."

Amateurs and young actors almost invariably incline to exaggeration; they permit themselves excess of movement and gesture; their discretion is insufficiently cultivated to be their tutor, and they overact strangely; they pace the stage wildly and incessantly, they rant, their arms and legs are employed with a sort of graceless and vehement diffuseness. As Mr. G. H. Lewes writes: "All but very great actors are redundant in gesticulation; not simply overdoing the significant, but unable to repress insignificant movements. . . . If actors will study fine models, they will learn that gestures to be effective must be significant, and to be significant they must be rare. To stand still on the stage and not appear 'a guy' is one of the elementary difficulties of the art, and one which is rarely mastered." Voltaire preparing a young actress to appear in one of his tragedies, tied her hands to her sides with packthread so as to check her tendency towards exuberance of gesticulation. Under this condition of compulsory immobility, she commenced to rehearse, and for some time she bore herself calmly enough; but at last, completely carried away by her feelings, she burst her bonds and flung up her arms. In some alarm at her seeming neglect of his

instructions she began to apologise to the poet; he smilingly reassured her, however; the gesticulation was *then* admirable, because it was irrepressible.

Of the elder tragedians variety or abundance of gesture seems not to have been required. The great Mr. Betterton indulged in little movement upon the stage. He had short, fat arms, we are told, "which he rarely lifted higher than his stomach." His left hand frequently lodged in his breast, between his coat and his waistcoat, while with his right he "prepared his speech." His actions were few but just. He was incapable of dancing, even in a country-dance; but an actor possessed of "a corpulent body and thick legs with large feet" could hardly be expected to dance. The comedians were allowed to be more mercurial; liveliness of manner and movement almost necessarily accompanied drollery of speech. But to the introduction of pantomimes was ascribed the employment of "a set of mechanical motions, the caricatures of gestures." Theophilus Cibber charged Garrick with a "pantomimical manner of acting every word in a sentence;" the very accusation Peregrine Pickle brought against Mr. Quin. Cibber credited himself with perception of the actor's merits when he condescended to pursue simple nature. "Yet," the critic continued, "I am not therefore to be blind to his studied tricks, his over-

fondness for extravagant attitudes, frequent affected starts, convulsions, twitchings, jerkings of the body, sprawling of the fingers, slapping the breast and pockets," &c. Garrick had been a diligent student of the pantomimical feats, the wonderful mimicry of Rich. "That Garrick," writes Cibber, "before his taste was mature should think the expressive dumb show of Rich might be introduced with effect in stage dialogue, is not surprising." Macklin's acrimonious account of Garrick's histrionic method ascribes to him excessive movement and gesticulation. "His art in acting consisted in incessantly pawing and hawling the characters about with whom he was concerned in the scene; and where he did not paw or hawl the characters, he stalked between them and the audience; and that generally when they were speaking the most important and interesting passage in the scene, which demanded, in propriety, a strict attention. When he spoke himself, he pulled about the character he spoke to and squeezed his hat, hung forward, and stood almost upon one foot, with no part of the other to the ground but the toe of it. His whole action when he made love in tragedy or in comedy, when he was familiar with his friend, when he was in anger, sorrow, rage, consisted in squeezing his hat, thumping his breast, strutting up and down the stage, and pawing the characters that he acted with." This

criticism must be accepted with due allowance for the spirit of detraction which largely animated the author.

It was said of the comedian Woodward that he was Harlequin in every part he played; his great pantomimic experience affected his every impersonation. He was reputed to be, after Rich, "the best teller of a story in dumb show the English stage had ever seen." He acquired in this way an extraordinary habit of suiting the action to the word and the word to the action, of illustrating speech with gesture. If he was required to mention an undertaker, he flapped his hat, pursed his brow, clasped his hands, and with a burlesque solemnity strode across the stage before he spoke; he would mimic the wiping of a glass or the drawing of a cork at the word "waiter," and could not say "mercer" till he had measured off several yards of cloth on the flap of his coat. It is added, however, that he "did these things with such strength of imitation and of humour that, although it was flagrantly wrong, criticism itself could not forbear to laugh."

Goldsmith observing that the English used very little gesture in ordinary conversation, found as a consequence that our players were stiff and formal of deportment, that their action sat uneasily upon them, and that they were obliged to supply stage gestures by their imagination alone. A French comedian

might discover proper models of action in every company and in every coffee-house he entered. But an Englishman could only take his models from the stage itself; he could only imitate nature from an imitation of nature. "I know of no set of men more likely to be improved by travelling than those of the theatrical profession," wrote the Doctor. "The inhabitants of the continent are less reserved than here; they may be seen through upon a first acquaintance; such are the proper models to draw from; they are at once striking and they are found in great abundance." It would be inexcusable in a comedian to add everything of his own to the poet's dialogue, yet as to action he was entirely at liberty. In this way it was open to him to show the fertility of his genius, the poignancy of his humour, and the exactness of his judgment. Goldsmith describes a French actor, while exhibiting an ungovernable rage as the hero of the comedy 'l'Avare,' betraying the avariciousness of Harpagon's disposition by stooping suddenly to pick up a pin and quilting it in the flap of his coat-pocket with great assiduity. "Two candles are lighted up for his wedding; he flies and extinguishes one; it is, however, lighted up again; he then steals to it and privately crams it into his pocket." A representation of the 'Mock Doctor' was also commended. "Here again the comedian had an opportunity of heighten-

ing the ridicule by action. The French player sits in a chair with a high back, and then begins to show away by talking nonsense which he would have thought Latin by those who do not understand a syllable of the matter. At last he grows enthusiastic, enjoys the admiration of the company, tosses his legs and arms about, and, in the midst of his raptures and vociferation, he and the chair fall back together." If this should be thought dull in the recital, it is urged that "the gravity of Cato could not stand it in the representation," and that there hardly existed a character in comedy to which a player of real humour could not add strokes of vivacity such as would secure great applause. Instead of this, however, the fine gentlemen of the theatre were wont through a whole part to do nothing but strut and open their snuff-boxes; while the pretty fellows sat with their legs crossed, and the clowns pulled up their breeches. These proceedings, the critic concludes, if once or even twice repeated, might do well enough; "but to see them served up in every scene argues the actor almost as barren as the character he would expose."

Goldsmith accounted Mademoiselle Clairon the most perfect female figure he had ever seen upon the stage; not that nature had bestowed more personal beauty upon her than upon certain English actresses—there were many, indeed, who possessed as much "statuary

grace," by which was meant "elegance unconnected with motion," as she did; but they all fell infinitely short of her when the soul came "to give expression to the limb and animate every feature." Her entrance upon the scene was pronounced to be "excessively engaging." She did not come in glancing round and staring at the audience as though she was reckoning the receipts, or intended to see as well as to be seen. Her eyes were first fixed upon the other persons in the play, then gradually turned "with enchanting diffidence" upon the spectators. Her first words were delivered with scarcely any motion of the arm: "her hands and her tongue never set out together; the one prepared us for the other." She sometimes began with a mute eloquent attitude; but she never advanced all at once with hands, eyes, head, and voice." By a simple beginning she gave herself "the power of rising in the passion of the scene." As she proceeded, her every gesture, every look, acquired new violence, till at last transported she filled "the whole vehemence of the part and all the idea of the poet." Her hands were not alternately stretched out and then drawn in again "as with the singing women at Sadler's Wells," but employed with graceful variety; every moment they pleased with new and unexpected eloquence. And further, she did not flourish her hands while the upper part of her arm was motionless,

nor had she the ridiculous appearance "as if her elbows were pinned to her hips."

Goldsmith particularly recommends "our rising actresses," of all the cautions to be given them, never to take notice of the audience upon any occasion whatsoever: he could not pardon a lady upon the stage who, when she attracted the admiration of the spectators, turned about to make them a low curtsey for their applause. "Such a figure no longer continues Belvidere, but at once drops into Mrs. Cibber." Let the audience applaud ever so loudly, their praises should pass, "except at the end of the epilogue," with seeming inattention. But the while the critic advised "skilful attention to gestures," he deprecated study of it in the looking-glass. This, without some precaution, would render their action formal, stiff, and affected. People seldom improved when they had no other model but themselves to copy from. And he records his remembrance of a notable actor "who made great use of his flattering monitor, and yet was one of the stiffest figures ever seen." His apartment was hung round with looking-glasses, that he might see his person twenty times reflected upon entering the room; "and I will make bold to say he saw twenty very ugly fellows when he did so."

No doubt the harlequin of the present time, if a less valued and important personage than

his exemplar, has preserved certain of the traditions of Rich's harlequin, while various of Rich's postures and gestures which Garrick was said to have imported into stage dialogue may still linger in the theatre. The manners, even the mannerisms, of a popular actor become popular in their turn, and are imitated and adopted by his successors. The admired comedian Robert Wilks had, we are informed, a certain peculiar custom of pulling down his ruffles and rolling his stockings; assuredly a later generation of actors pulled down their ruffles and rolled their stockings precisely after Mr. Wilks's manner, just as there are players of to-day who retain the late Charles Mathews's lively habit of adjusting his side locks, his cravat and his wristbands, of putting on and off his gloves, &c.—resembling him in those respects, if in none other. Leigh Hunt writes of Lewis, the favourite comedian of eighty or ninety years since, that "he drew on his gloves like a gentleman, and then darted his fingers at the ribs of the character he was talking with in a way that carried with it whatever was suggestive and sparkling and amusing." The stage has known since Lewis's time very much darting of fingers at the ribs of the characters. The elder Mathews's method of expressing the irritability of Sir Fretful Plagiary by taking furious pinches of snuff and by frequent buttoning and unbuttoning of his double-

breasted coat is not yet lost to the theatre. Concerning Munden's variety and significance of grimace and gesture Leigh Hunt grows eloquent. The actor was said to make something out of nothing by his singular "intensity of contemplation." He would play the part of a vagabond loiterer about inn-doors, would look at and for ten minutes together gradually approach from a distance a pot of ale on a table, the while he kept the house in roars of laughter by the intense idea which he dumbly conveyed of its contents and the not less intense manifestation of his cautious but inflexible resolution to drink it. Hunt further applauds Munden's personation of a credulous old antiquary upon whom a battered beaver has been imposed as "the hat of William Tell," and records how the comedian reverently put the hat on his head, and then solemnly walked to and fro with such an excessive sense of the glory with which he was crowned and the weight of reflected heroism he sustained, elegantly halting now and then to assume the attitude of one drawing a bow, "that the spectator could hardly have been astonished had they seen his hair stand on end and carry the hat aloft with it."

Stage gestures acquire, no doubt, a rather stereotyped character, and those who profess to teach acting are apt to inculcate very conventional forms of histrionic expression. The

action that is to accompany the word is subject to many rules and limitations. Charles Dickens, who wrote disrespectfully of the Théâtre Français as an establishment devoted to a dreary classicality—"a kind of tomb where you went as the Eastern people did in the stories to think of your unsuccessful loves and dead relations"—especially condemned the gestures employed even by its leading performers. "Between ourselves, even one's best friends there"—he was thinking of Regnier, perhaps—"are at times very aggravating. One tires of seeing a man, through any number of acts, remembering everything by patting his forehead with the flat of his hand, jerking out sentences by shaking himself and piling them up in pyramids over his head with his right forefinger. And they have a generic small-comedy piece," he continues, "where you see two sofas and three little tables, to which a man enters with his hat on, to talk to another man—and in respect of which you know exactly when he will get up from one sofa to sit on the other, and take his hat off one table to put his hat upon the other—which strikes one quite as ludicrously as a good farce."

It is clear that a certain forfeiture of dignity must result from too literal a system of illustrative gesture. Cibber's personation of Wolsey was much applauded, yet he was strongly censured for the vulgarity of

the action with which he embellished the words :

> This candle burns not clear ; 'tis I must snuff it.
> Then out it goes.

It seems that with his thumb and forefinger, or with his first and second fingers, he imitated the manner of extinguishing a candle by means of a pair of snuffers. Genest writes : "One must lament that Shakespeare should have used a metaphor so unworthy of him, but surely the actor should rather endeavour to sink the thing than to bring it peculiarly into notice ;" and he proceeds to record that when Young played Wolsey he folded his arms the while he delivered the passage and slurred the metaphor completely, evincing in this respect better judgment than Kemble, who, although he did not, like Cibber, pretend to ply the snuffers, yet elevated and wrinkled his grand nose and assumed a disgusted expression, as though the departed candle had left behind it an unpleasant odour. Much discussion arose concerning Kemble's action as Hamlet when, denouncing the slanders he was reading, he tore the page from the book to demonstrate his bad opinion of the satirical rogue, the author ; and Macready's waving aloft of a cambric handkerchief by way of expressing Hamlet's intention to be "idle" may almost be viewed as "the direful spring of woes unnumbered." Edwin Forrest derided the

proceeding, described it as a *pas de mouchoir*, even hissed it: and a feeling of enmity was engendered between the two tragedians which so spread and strengthened as to acquire almost the importance of a national conflict, and terminated in the great New York riot of 1849.

"Look you whether he has not turned his colour and has tears in his eyes," remarks Polonius of the First Player and his recitation; and Hamlet also comments upon the wanned visage of the actor, the tears in his eyes, his distracted aspect, broken voice, &c. Tears do not rarely visit the eyes of the players, who are moved to sympathy by their own simulations and are able to force their souls so to their own conceits. It is not so much that they are convinced by the familiar Horatian counsel, *Si vis me flere*, &c.; a proneness to tears is rather a constitutional faculty or failing which players share with playgoers, novel-readers, auditors of poetry, sermons, speeches, &c. But can the actor discharge the colour from his countenance otherwise than prosaically by rubbing the rouge off? There is extant a description of Betterton's performance of Hamlet which describes the actor, although naturally of a ruddy and sanguine complexion, as turning pale as his own neckcloth instantly upon the appearance of the ghost. "His whole body seemed to be affected with a tremor inexpres-

sible, so that had his father's ghost actually risen before him he could not have been seized with more real agonies. And this was felt so strongly by the audience that the blood seemed to curdle in their veins likewise," &c. An American critic has left a curious account of the "unique and inimitable method" of the late Junius Brutus Booth, and his extraordinary "control over the vital and involuntary functions." We are informed that the actor could "tremble from head to foot, or tremble in one outstretched arm to the finger-tips while holding it in the firm grasp of the other hand. . . . The veins of his corded and magnificent neck would swell, and the whole throat and face become suffused with crimson in a moment, in the crisis of passion, to be succeeded on the ebb of feeling by an ashy paleness. To throw the blood into the face is a comparatively easy feat for a sanguine man by simply holding the breath; but for a man of pale complexion to speak passionate and thrilling words pending the suffusion is quite another thing. On the other hand, it must be observed that no amount of merely physical exertion or exercise of voice could bring colour into that pale, proud, intellectual face. . . . In a word, he commanded his own pulses, as well as the pulses of his auditors, with most despotic ease."

From his early practice in pantomime

Edmund Kean derived, no doubt, much of the ease and grace of attitude and gesture he displayed as a tragedian. Hazlitt specially commends the actor's impressive and Titianesque postures, yet objects to the gesture he employed as Iago in the last scene of Othello, when he malignantly pointed to the corpses of the Moor's victims. "It is not in the character of the part, which consists in the love of mischief, not as an end, but as a means. . . . Besides, it is not in the text of Shakespeare." When Kean as Richard, in his familiar colloquy with Buckingham, crossed his hands behind his back, certain critics held the action to be "too natural;" while his pugilistic gestures in the concluding scene, though censured by some, were much applauded by others. Hazlitt wrote of him: "He fought like one drunk with wounds, and the attitude in which he stands with his hands stretched out, after his sword is taken from him, had a preternatural and terrific grandeur, as if his will could not be disarmed, and the very phantoms of his despair had a withering power." Dr. Doran has noted certain of the actor's "grand moments," when, at the close of his career, he appeared a pitiable sight: "Genius was not traceable in that bloated face; intellect was all but quenched in those once matchless eyes; . . . he moved only with difficulty, using his sword as a stick." Yet there arose a murmur of approbation at

the pause and action of his extended arm when he said—as though consigning all the lowering clouds to the sea—"in the deep bosom of the ocean, *buried!*" The words, "The dogs bark at me as I halt by them," were so suited with action as to elicit a round of applause.

Mr. Gould's essays upon the Histrionic Genius of Junius Brutus Booth make frequent mention of the "manual eloquence," the appropriate "hand-play" of the tragedian, and his inventiveness in that respect. When as Shylock, replying to Salarino's question touching Antonio's flesh, "What's that good for?" he said, "To bait fish withal," he was wont, in his tamer moods, to employ "a gesture as if holding a fishing-rod." When as Cassius he said of Cæsar, "His coward lips did from their colour fly," Booth illustrated the text by a momentary action, as though he were carrying a standard. "The movement was fine as giving edge to the sarcasm, but," the essayist admits, "pointed to a redundancy of action which sometimes appeared in this great actor's personations, marking the excess in him, however, of those high histrionic powers: keen feeling and shaping imagination." Further, Booth's Cassius was "signalised by one action of characteristic excellence and originality." After the murder of Cæsar, Booth "strode right across the dead body and out of the scene in silent

and disdainful triumph." As Iago, when saying,

> Such a handkerchief
> (I am sure it was your wife's) did I to-day
> See Cassio wipe his beard with,

Booth, while pretending to lay his hand on his heart "to enforce asseveration," tucked away more securely in his doublet the very handkerchief which "with fiendish purpose he intended Cassio *should* wipe his beard with." When he exclaimed, "The Moor! I know his trumpet," he seemed to imitate the very sound of the instrument; "tossed it from his lips with the careless grace of an accomplished musician." When as Othello he declared, "I know not where is that *Promethean* heat," it was as though the adjective had but just occurred to him, and the passage was "accompanied by a wandering and questioning gesture." At the words, "It is the very error of the moon; she comes more near the earth than she was wont," &c., his gesture "seemed to figure the faith of the Chaldean and to bring the moon more near." He slew himself by means of a dagger he had worn concealed in his turban.

The value of action as the ally of words will be very freely admitted by those who remember Mr. Irving as Philip, in the Laureate's tragedy of 'Queen Mary,' toying with his poniard, and with peculiar significance

turning its point towards his interlocutor, the Count de Feria, at the words—

> And if you be not secret in this matter—
> You understand me there, too?

Feria answers: "Sir, I do." For the action was as intelligible as though the words had been spoken and sentence of death had been passed upon the Count for his failure to be secret in the matter.

CHAPTER IV.

THE STATUS OF THE PLAYER.

THE status of the player has long been a subject of discussion, almost a source of anxiety. So, too, there has been much and grave debate concerning the worthiness, the intellectuality, or the non-intellectuality, of the histrion's art. The Church has been against him, and perhaps even more than the Church—the Chapel; yet may the player in some sort claim kindred with the priest, demonstrating that the theatre is the adjunct of the chancel, and that the mysteries and moral plays of religion lie at the foundation of the secular drama. And the actor has to encounter foes among his own household. Mrs. Fanny Kemble, who should be an authority, pronounced acting "the very lowest of the arts, admitting that it deserved to be classed among them at all," which she was not sure it did. And Thomas Moore, poet and (in a small way) playwright, decided that acting was "not an intellectual art;" that Mrs. Siddons was really "a dull woman," and

John Kemble, although "a cultivated man," still "a poor creature when he put pen to paper or otherwise attempted to bring anything out of his mind." Indeed, it was constantly charged against poor Mrs. Siddons that she was dull in that she carried into private life something of her professional manner: "stabbed the potatoes;" startled a shopman by the solemnity of her inquiry, "Will it wash?" or awed all about her by the tragic tones of her statement, "I do love ale dearly."

In England, the players long occupied a position of grave disadvantage. They were whilom counted among the "vagrom men" whom Dogberry especially charged his watch to "comprehend." They were of the vagabonds described by an ancient statute as "such as wake on the night and sleep on the day, and haunt customary taverns and alehouses and routs about; and no man wot from whence they come or whither they go." An Act passed in the reign of Elizabeth declared all players to be rogues and vagabonds unless they were formerly engaged as "players of enterludes" to some baron or person of high degree. Ben Jonson, in his *Poetaster*, makes Lupus observe: "These players are an idle generation, and do much harm in a State—corrupt young gentry very much; I know it; I have not been a tribune thus long and observed nothing. Besides, they

will rob us, us that are magistrates, of our respect; bring us upon their stages, and make us ridiculous to the plebeians. They will play you, or me, the wisest men they can come by, still only to bring us in contempt with the vulgar and make us cheap." Tuscus, another of the characters, adds: "They are grown licentious, the rogues; libertines—flat libertines! They forget that they are in the statute, the rascals! They are blazoned there—there they are tricked, they and their pedigrees; they need no other heralds, I wis," &c.

In Elizabeth's time, however, it is probable that all players of good repute were members of regular companies, duly protected by some great personage, wearing his badge or crest, and styling themselves his servants—just as even now the Drury Lane company, by virtue of Davenant's patent, still claim the title of her Majesty's servants—and were therefore exempt from the penalties of the statute. Under Elizabeth, indeed, it seems likely that the players enjoyed a social position far superior to that accorded them in more recent times. They were permitted to call themselves, and were usually styled, "gentlemen;" they even aspired to rank as "esquires," the title of esquire being then conferred far more scrupulously than at present. The old anonymous comedy, *The Return from Parnassus*, 1606, particularly taunted them

with their ambition in this respect, expressly referring, it has been presumed, to the cases of Shakespeare and Alleyn, who had become landowners and properly qualified esquires. Complaint is thus made of the pretensions of the players:

> "Vile world that lifts them up to high degree,
> And treads us down in grovelling misery!
> England affords these glorious vagabonds,
> That carried erst their fardels on their backs,
> Coursers to ride on through the gazing streets,
> Sweeping it in their glaring satin suits,
> And pages to attend their mastership:
> With mouthing words that better wits have framed,
> They purchase lands and now esquires are named."

"Every poet writes squire now," says Mr. Damplay in the introduction to Ben Jonson's comedy, *The Magnetic Lady*. And the poets and players of the time enjoyed like positions.

But with the Civil War came great degradation of the actors; they were, indeed, reduced to the cruellest straits. The status of something more than respectability they had attained after much and painful struggling was wrested from them. The Puritan party secured literally the whiphand of them; they were again to be reckoned among Dogberry's "vagrom men," and judged to be fit food for Bridewell, the stocks, and the whipping-post. Upon the death of the Lord Protector, however, the Commonwealth crumbled to pieces: the king enjoyed his own again and the players theirs—almost. There

was general abandonment of Puritanism in favour of pleasure; the stage no longer lacked patrons, if, mirroring the times and keeping pace with its public, it condescended to exhibitions of a gross and licentious sort. The players thrived, albeit their social position was little heeded, and they were subjected to much wanton and arrogant treatment at the hands of their audience. The actresses became the sport and prey of king and courtiers; the actors upon the least offence—for mimicry of a nobleman or imitation even of his dress—were locked up, cudgelled, attacked by bravoes. Pepys relates how Lacy, the comedian, is sent to prison for appearing in a play which satirised the trafficking for places among the courtiers. Released, Lacy not unnaturally inveighs against the author, Ned Howard, whose comedy has brought about such mischief. Player and poet fall to blows; and the pit calmly wonders that Howard does not run Lacy through, "he being too mean a fellow to fight with." De Grammont tells of an actress shamefully tricked into a false marriage with the Earl of Oxford, and vainly seeking redress from the King. "I see the gallants do begin to be tired with the vanity and pride of the theatre actors, who are indeed grown very proud and rich."—Pepys's notes.

The vagrant Act of the twelfth of Queen

Anne repealed the statute of Elizabeth, yet still classed all "common players," among "rogues and vagabonds." A legal decision as to the status of the actor was at length pronounced. A player named Harper, who, in 1730, seceded from the Drury Lane company, mutinying against its incompetent manager, Mr. Highmore, was arrested under the warrant of a justice of the peace, and committed to Bridewell as a vagrant. In due course the case came before the Lord Chief Justice Yorke, afterwards the Earl of Hardwick, eminent counsel being heard on either side. For Harper it was contended that, although a player, he was not liable under the Act of Anne to committal as a vagabond; he did not wander from place to place, nor was there likelihood of his becoming chargeable to any parish; he was an honest man, paid his way, injured none, was esteemed by his neighbours and by many gentlemen of good condition, and further, he was a freeholder in the county of Surrey, and a householder in possession of a vote for the borough of Westminster. Could such a man be a rogue and a vagabond within the meaning of the Act? On the other hand, his liability was insisted upon because of his performing at various theatres and booths, and especially at Bartholomew and Southwark Fairs. Judgment was given against the manager and in favour of the actor. Harper

was discharged upon his recognisance, and quitted Westminster Hall amid the acclamations of several hundred persons who were assembled on the occasion.

But this decision notwithstanding, society remained of opinion that the players were inferior creatures, the slaves of the public, to be beaten into good behaviour whenever the occasion seemed to require it. The audiences of the eighteenth century were quick to take offence, and regarded the actors almost as their natural enemies; upon light provocation, swords were drawn, the benches torn up, the draperies slashed, the mirrors smashed, the orchestra attacked, the harpsichord, bass-viols, and other musical instruments destroyed, and the stage taken possession of by the rioters. A theatrical disturbance proceeded systematically: the ladies were politely handed out, wine was sent for, angry speeches were made, and then, the manager still proving obstinate or unyielding, the work of demolition commenced. Noblemen and gentlemen were known seriously to propose that the theatre should be burnt to the ground. The manager and his company were to hold themselves at the beck and call of the audience, and be ready to appear upon the stage for the proffering of explanations or apologies whenever these should be demanded of them. When, in 1774, after three nights of uproar

at Drury Lane, because of the raising of the prices, Mr. Fleetwood, the manager, was summoned before the footlights, he sent on one of the company to explain that, being a manager simply, and not an actor, he was exempt from the duty of appearing upon the stage. This excuse was admitted; it was recognised that Mr. Fleetwood was a gentleman and not a player. The audience therefore accepted his invitation to send a deputation to him in the greenroom for the discussion and settlement of the matter in dispute.

Some years before, a serious disturbance had occurred in the Theatre Royal, Dublin. A tipsy gentleman had climbed from the pit over the spiked partition on to the stage, and forced his way into the greenroom. The actresses, alarmed at the inflamed aspect and violent tones of the intruder, sought refuge in their dressing-rooms. Sheridan, actor and manager, about to appear in the character of Æsop, confronted the intruder, and, with the assistance of the servants of the theatre and others, ejected him, compelling his return to his seat in the pit. But the gentleman now commenced a new plan of annoyance; he took a basket of fruit from one of the saleswomen, and forthwith proceeded to pelt the manager with apples and oranges, the missives being so adroitly directed that the actor was struck on the forehead, and even

slightly wounded by the iron of the false nose he wore as Æsop. Sheridan appealed to the audience to protect him from this outrageous conduct, and the rioter's friends at last quieted him; but not before certain angry words had passed between him and the player. Sheridan, denounced as a "rascal" and "scoundrel," had replied that he was "as good a gentleman as his assailant." The next day the manager's foes declared that he had arrogantly proclaimed himself "as good a gentleman as any in the house." Great excitement arose from this dispute. "The whole city," writes the historian of the Irish stage, "nay, the whole kingdom was engaged in this quarrel, which not only threatened the ruin of all those whose bread was dependent on the theatre, but the lives and fortunes of many without doors, who were so rash as to engage publicly in the affair, which was nothing more than the honour of an actor. But his cause was a noble one—a defence of decency and the decorum of the stage, in which he was supported by all persons of worth and honour, and by the laws of his country." There was great rioting in the theatre night after night, and in the public streets, the young gentlemen of the university joining heartily in the fray. The shops were closed, bodies of armed men paraded the city, great alarm prevailed, sundry persons even in-

vading the Court of Chancery and beseeching his lordship to protect them against the fury of the scholars. The Lords Justices now ordered the Master of the Revels to close the theatre by authority, and the quarrel was removed to the courts of law. The young gentleman who had commenced hostilities was arrested and brought to trial, charged with assaulting Sheridan and destroying valuable property in the dressing-rooms and wardrobe of the theatre. Sheridan, appearing upon the table as a witness, was impudently addressed by the prisoner's counsel: "I want to see a curiosity. I have often seen a gentleman soldier and a gentleman sailor, and other sorts of gentlemen, but I have never yet seen a gentleman player." "Sir," said Mr. Sheridan, bowing courteously —("he was well dressed," Victor notes)—"I hope you see one now." The prisoner was found guilty, and sentenced to a fine of 500*l.* and imprisonment for three months. It is to be observed, however, that even Sheridan's warmest advocates, while maintaining his right to be considered a gentleman by birth and education, as a scholar of Westminster and a Bachelor of Arts of Dublin University, yet conceded that he had degraded himself "when his fortunes and his singular abilities led him to the stage." They urged, however, as some excuse for him, that he was a skilful actor, that he paid his company and the

Dublin tradesmen punctually, and altogether conducted himself ably as a manager.

It long seemed a sort of fashion to speak contemptuously of the player, to hold his profession in derision. When Lady Susan Fox eloped with Mr. O'Brien, the comedian of Drury Lane Theatre, Horace Walpole commented: "Poor Lord Ilchester is almost distracted; indeed, it is the completion of disgrace—*even a footman were preferable;* the publicity of the hero's profession perpetuates the mortification. . . . I could not have believed that Lady Susan would have stooped so low," &c. Two years before, Foote, in his comedy of *The Liar*, anticipating Walpole, had made the valet Papillon relate: "Some would have me turn player, and others Methodist preacher; but as I had not money to build me a tabernacle, I did not think it would answer; and as to *player*, whatever might happen to me I was determined not to bring disgrace upon my family; and so I resolved to turn *footman!*" When Junius believed himself aggrieved by some supposed interference on the part of Garrick, he wrote insolently, the old statute of Elizabeth being once more employed as a weapon of offence: "Now mark me, *vagabond:* keep to your pantomimes, or be assured you shall hear of it. Meddle no more, thou busy informer," &c. Long after Garrick's admission to the society of the most eminent in the land, he

was denied by many of his correspondents the dignity of an *esquire*. With a large class he was always plain *Mr.* Garrick; while some, bent upon wounding his pride, were careful to add the word *player* after his name whenever they had occasion to address him. It is curious to read the complaints of Macready at a much later date touching "the uncertainty of his position." He had been present at the Literary Fund Dinner, and his name was included in the list of toasts; apparently he left the table to avoid making a speech. He notes: "I read in every newspaper of this week that my art is a very humble one—if, indeed, it be an art at all—and that its professors are entitled to little respect; and here, when in courtesy I am admitted as *Mr. Macready* among the esquires of the Royal Academy, the King's Printing-office, the *Quarterly Review*, &c., I am to speak without the possibility of knowing what place is allowed me as an artist, or what degree of particular consideration may be extended to me as a man consistent in his private conduct." A few months afterwards he is writing: "It is very true that I am not sought for by persons of rank, as they are termed—by persons of distinction; but heretofore I could repel this indifference with indifference. I felt my title to rank with any man as a gentleman unquestionable. How can I now answer the objections that

may be made against me?" In the interim he had to reproach himself with his assault and battery of Mr. Bunn.

The comedians of France it seems may now hope to become Chevaliers of the Legion of Honour. Our players have never been admitted to the English honours of knighthood. Macready seemed aggrieved that he was plain *Mr.* Macready while the Royal Academicians of his time, by virtue of their diplomas, were entitled to the rank of *esquire.* Might not with equal justice David Garrick have complained that he remained plain David Garrick while his friend Joshua Reynolds was dubbed Sir Joshua? Or might there not as well have been a Sir John Kemble, a Sir Edmund Kean, or a Sir William Charles Macready, as a Sir Thomas Lawrence, a Sir Martin Archer Shee, or a Sir Charles Eastlake? But no English player has ever been knighted. There was talk once that the late Charles Kean was to be raised to the rank of Sir Charles in recognition of his services as purveyor of theatrical entertainments to the Court. But the actor died undistinguished in that way. He reckoned it as the most flattering honour ever conferred upon him that, on the 21st February 1849, her Majesty accorded him a personal interview; but this was simply that he might be assured that his management of the Windsor Castle performances had perfectly

satisfied his Royal employer. Rarely has society been convulsed by the presence at Court of an actor, otherwise than in a professional capacity. There is, perhaps, but one such instance upon record. In the Diaries and Letters of the late Sir George Jackson may be found curious mention of an incident occurring at one of the Prince Regent's *levées* in March 1812: "The greatest novelty there was Kemble! He came, I presume, to take leave on his departure for America, where he is to play twenty-two nights for 6000*l.* and his expenses paid. I have heard that Necker said the French Revolution was decidedly begun when one of the ministers of Louis XVI. went to an audience of his Majesty in shoe-strings. The appearance of an actor at Court is, I believe, quite unprecedented."

The status of the actor is no doubt difficult to define, because there are, in truth, actors and actors. If we grant that the representative of the Prince of Denmark is well entitled to rank as a gentleman, or even to receive the dignity of knighthood, are we quite so sure about the personator of the Second Gravedigger? Honour Macbeth by all means; but how shall we treat the First Murderer? The histrionic profession is really a ladder of many rungs. Mount to the highest or linger on the lowest, it is only a question of degree—you are still a player.

Divinity, Law, and Medicine can be hedged round, protected, and restricted by means of legislative provisions, certificates, passes, competitive examinations, and diplomas. To these walled-in vocations no one can obtain admission who is unprovided with the ticket precisely prescribed by law. But the Stage is necessarily an open profession, its boundaries are vague, it knows nothing of "scientific frontiers"; the ranks of the players are never closed against recruits, however unpromising may be their aspect, humble their qualifications, or obscure their antecedents. It follows that the actor—unlike the parson, the doctor, the lawyer—is not viewed as a gentleman simply in right of his calling. His gentlemanhood must rest upon himself, in no way upon his profession: must arise from his merits and distinction as an individual, and not depend upon his connection with a class. Still in this respect his situation corresponds in a great measure with that of the members of the other uncertificated professions, if they may so be described. The actor may fairly claim kindred with the author and the artist; and his claim will not be disallowed.

It must be said, however, that the author and the artist, if even now their status can be held to be determined, were long kept waiting at the door of society. It is not so many years since Thackeray wrote: "Ranks are

defined. A real gentleman may get money by the law, or by wearing a red coat and fighting, or a black one and preaching; but that he should sell himself to *Art*—forbid it, Heaven! And do not let your ladyship on reading this cry, 'Stuff! stupid envy, rank Republicanism; an artist *is* a gentleman.' Madame, would you like to see your son, the Honourable Fitzroy Plantagenet, a painter? You would die sooner; the escutcheon of the Smigsmags would be blotted for ever, if Plantagenet ever ventured to make a mercantile use of a bladder of paint." On another occasion, the same eminent authority pronounced that in England, "a grocer's daughter would think she made a *mésalliance* by marrying a painter; and a literary man, in spite of all we can say against it, ranks below that class of gentry composed of the apothecary, the attorney, the wine merchant," &c. And then the story is set forth of a certain Mr. Asterisk, who at a country dinner-party of squires and parsons had delighted all with his learning and wit. "Who is that monstrous pleasant fellow?" asked one of the squires. "Don't you know?" replied another. It's Asterisk the author of *So-and-so*, and a famous contributor to *Such-and-such* a magazine." "Good heavens!" said the squire, quite horrified. "A literary man! I thought he had been a gentleman!" But no doubt opinion in this

regard has become more enlightened of late years.

One force arrayed against the English actor, and placing him at a disadvantage in comparison with artists and professional authors, is probably little known to the French comedian. There is nothing in France that corresponds exactly with that English Puritan party, the bigots, fanatics, and fools who still hold playhouses and players in reprobation and pious horror. Moreover, that liability to be publicly hissed, which is common to the actors of both countries, and was long held to be the bar to the winning of the red ribbon of the Legion of Honour by the *sociétaires* of the Théâtre Français, if it may not exactly have hindered the bestowal of knighthood upon the players of England, is not shared by the authors and artists. These may be condemned by reviewers or shunned by patrons and buyers, but they are spared ocular and auricular proof of failure and condemnation. That theatrical audiences will ever resign that right to hiss which, time out of mind, they have enjoyed, is hardly to be counted upon. Manners may mend, and the censorious become less offensively demonstrative; it is to be feared, however, that the possibility of being hissed will always remain among the risks of the histrionic profession, if not among its absolute drawbacks. But, after all, hisses can be

endured and survived; there is nothing that is really deadly about them; they are easily lived down and forgotten. "They have hissed *me*," said Elliston, in his grandest manner, by way of reply to the little ballet-girl who complained that the public had visited upon her its displeasure. When "Gentleman" Smith plumed himself upon his gentlemanliness as an actor, he boasted not that he had never been hissed, but that he had never blackened his face nor ascended or descended through a trap-door, although to such processes he might legitimately have submitted himself, supposing to have essayed to personate Othello or the Ghost in *Hamlet*, parts worthy of an actor of high genius and position.

The question of knighthood need not trouble the English player as the red ribbon question has troubled the French. As Thackeray asks concerning the painters: "What need have they of honours out of the profession? Why are they to be be-knighted like a parcel of aldermen?" Assuredly in these times knighthood has become an incongruous, insignificant, and even somewhat ludicrous sort of dignity. Yet if the professors of acting are really desirous of becoming knights, as the doctors, lawyers, painters, architects, sculptors, musical composers and conductors, editors, authors, and sheriffs of the time are knights, there seems no very

excellent reason why the distinction should for a moment be supposed to be beyond their reach or inconsistent with their status. That they will act the better because of the addition of "handles" to their names is not really to be believed.

CHAPTER V.

THE ECLIPSE OF SHAKESPEARE.

Is it altogether "a false notion that the general sympathy with the merits of Shakespeare ever beat with a languid or intermittent pulse?" that the noble dramas—

> Those flights upon the banks of Thames
> That so did take Eliza and our James—

were much less esteemed in the reign of Charles I., and for a long time afterwards? Malone and Steevens ventured to deny in effect that the poet was illustrious in the century succeeding his own, and adduced evidence in support of their opinion. As a consequence, De Quincey, in his biography of Shakespeare, written for the seventh edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, expressed himself very wrathfully in their regard, even accusing them of absolute untruth. He sought to demolish these "confident dogmatists," as he called them, by simply contradicting them. He wrote confessedly without books to assist him, admitting that for many

of his dates and other materials he had been obliged to depend solely on his memory.

They had cited Dryden. "To cite Dryden as a witness for any purpose against Shakespeare," De Quincey wrote indignantly—"Dryden, who of all men had the most ransacked wit and exhausted language in celebrating the supremacy of Shakespeare's genius—does indeed require as much shamelessness in feeling as mendacity in principle." De Quincey's memory was here at fault. Dryden, it is true, pays tribute of a sort to the merits of Shakespeare, but plainly shows that the poet was less valued than once he had been. In the 'Essay of Dramatic Poesy,' while stating that in his own age Shakespeare was prized beyond all his contemporaries, and that "in the last King's court, when Ben's reputation was at highest, Sir John Suckling, and with him the greater part of the courtiers, set our Shakespeare far above him," Dryden admits that others were then (1666) "generally preferred before him," and proceeds to describe the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher as "now the most pleasant and frequent entertainments of the stage: two of theirs being acted through the year for one of Shakespeare's or Jonson's. The reason," he explains, "is because there is a certain gaiety in their comedies and pathos in their more serious plays which suits generally with all men's humours. Shakespeare's lan-

guage is likewise a little obsolete, and Ben Jonson's wit comes short of theirs." Further, in his 'Defence of the Epilogue,' a postscript to his tragedies of the 'Conquest of Granada,' Dryden writes: "Let any man who understands English, read diligently the works of Shakespeare and Fletcher, and I dare undertake that he will find in every page either some solecism of speech or some notorious flaw in sense: and yet these men are reverenced when we are not forgiven." He denounces "the lameness of their plots:" made up of some "ridiculous incoherent story. . . . . I suppose I need not name 'Pericles, Prince of Tyre,' nor the historical plays of Shakespeare; besides many of the rest, as the 'Winter's Tale,' "Love's Labour's Lost,' 'Measure for Measure,' which were either grounded on impossibilities, or at least so meanly written that the comedy neither caused your mirth nor the serious part your concernment." He finds that Shakespeare "writes in many places below the dullest writers of our, or of any precedent, age. Never did any author precipitate himself from such heights of thought to so low expressions as he often does. He is the very Janus of poets: he wears almost everywhere two faces; and you have scarce begun to admire the one ere you despise the other. . . . . Let us, therefore, admire the beauties and the heights of Shakespeare, without falling after

him into a carelessness and (as I may call it) a lethargy of thought for whole scenes together." The audiences of the time of Shakespeare, and Beaumont and Fletcher, Dryden thus describes: "They knew no better, and therefore were satisfied with what they brought. Those who call theirs the Golden Age of Poetry have only this reason for it—that they were then content with acorns before they knew the use of bread," &c. Altogether, it must be said that Dryden's comments upon Shakespeare are not remarkable for their reverence, while they afford fair evidence of that comparative neglect of the poet to which Malone and Steevens had referred.

De Quincey, admitting it, passes lightly over the fact that inferior dramatists were sometimes preferred to Shakespeare. He argues that *ordinary minds*, in quest of relaxation, will reasonably prefer any recent drama to that which, having lost all its novelty, has lost much of its excitement, and that in cases of public entertainment, deriving part of their power from scenery and stage pomp, novelty is for *all minds* an essential condition of attraction. And this is certainly true. New things are often prized simply because of their newness, while old things are undervalued merely because they are old. In the course of time the plays of Shakespeare were classed in the established

repertory of the theatre; they had become what the actors call "stock pieces;" they no longer excited as once they did; their incidents and characters were now familiar; the element of surprise was removed from the entertainment. The public supporting the theatres were more interested in the new productions; they held the dramas they knew to be of less consideration than the dramas they had yet to make acquaintance with. Beaumont and Fletcher began to write in 1607, when Shakespeare had been for twenty years before the playgoing public. Nevertheless, Shakespeare had not ceased to produce in 1607; indeed, certain of his finest plays had yet to appear. Although Shakespeare is to be considered as the elder dramatist, the three poets may yet be viewed as contemporaries, producing plays side by side as it were. Beaumont even predeceased Shakespeare, and Fletcher survived him only nine years. It could hardly have been, therefore, on account solely of their greater novelty that the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher obtained the decided preference of the public. De Quincey, indeed, is constrained to account for this by allowing that, "in some departments of the comic, Beaumont and Fletcher, when writing in combination"—and this was only in the lifetime of Shakespeare—"really had a freedom and breadth of manner which excels the comedy of Shakespeare:" which is simply an

admission that Beaumont and Fletcher were preferred to Shakespeare because they were, in truth, superior to him.

Fletcher appears indeed, at one time, to have been especially exalted at the expense of Shakespeare. Cartwright, esteemed "one of the best poets, orators, and philosophers of his age," in his panegyrical verses addressed to Fletcher, at once compliments the younger and affronts the elder poet:

> Shakespeare to thee was dull, whose best jest lies
> I' th' ladies' questions and the fool's replies:
> Old-fashioned wit which walked from town to town
> In trunk-hose, which our fathers call the clown, &c.

Of course 'Twelfth Night' is here contemptuously referred to. And Birkenhead in his 'Address to Fletcher' must needs write:

> Brave Shakespeare flowed, yet had his ebbings too,
> Often above himselt, sometimes below;
> Thou always best!

A more famous poet, Denham, is scarcely less laudatory of Fletcher:

> When Jonson, Shakespeare, and thyself did sit,
> And swayed in the triumvirate of wit,
> Yet what from Jonson's oil and sweat did flow,
> Or what more easy Nature did bestow
> On Shakespeare's gentler muse, in thee full grown
> Their graces both appear.

A certain disregard of Shakespeare on the part of the public is also evidenced by the prologue to Shirley's comedy of the 'Sisters,'

acted at the Blackfriars Theatre probably about 1640:

> You see
> What audience we have; *what company*
> *To Shakespeare comes?*—whose mirth did once beguile
> Dull hours, and, buskined, made even sorrow smile;
> So lovely were the wounds that men would say
> They could endure the bleeding a whole day:
> *He has but few friends lately.*

While the prologue to the same author's later comedy of 'Love's Tricks; or, the School of Compliments,' upon its performance in 1667, contains the lines:

> In our old plays the humour, love, and passion,
> Like doublet, hose, and cloak, are out of fashion;
> That which the world called wit in Shakespeare's age
> Is laughed at as improper for our stage.

And Malone cites a satire of 1680, of like purport:

> At every shop, while Shakespeare's lofty style
> Neglected lies, to mice and worms a spoil,
> Gilt on the back, just smoking from the press
> The apprentice shows you Durfey, Hudibras, &c.

But this has carried us some years beyond the Restoration.

The Puritans closed the theatres, and, practically, destroyed the Elizabethan drama. The Restoration brought with it plays of its own, as it brought its own manners, fashions, follies, and vices. It persistently disparaged Shakespeare; viewed him, indeed, very scornfully. Grave Evelyn noted: "To a new play with several of my relatives: the 'Evening's

Love,'—a foolish plot and very profane; it afflicted me to see how the stage was degenerated and polluted by the licentious time;" and he further remarked that "now the old plays begin to disgust this refined age, since his Majesty's being so long abroad." This was in 1662; he had been witnessing a performance of 'Hamlet,' supported by the great Mr. Betterton. There is significance, too, in the very low estimate of certain of Shakespeare's plays entertained by Mr. Pepys. He may not be accounted very wise, yet Pepys was a man of some taste and cultivation, and was probably in advance of the average playgoers of his time. Would he have found courage to hold the poet so cheaply if the general opinion had not been depreciatory? It may be remembered that he accounted 'Romeo and Juliet' "a play of itself the worst that ever I heard;" that to his thinking, in comparison with Tuke's 'Adventures of Five Hours,' 'Othello' was 'a mean thing;" that he judged 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' to be "the most insipid ridiculous play that I saw in my life," &c. &c.

Pepys, recording his first purchase of a Shakespeare, discloses a curious preference for other authors. He had gained, it seems, some three pounds by his stationer's bill to the King, in the way, presumably, of illicit commission or perquisite, and he resolved forthwith to lay out the money in books.

He found himself at a great loss what to choose. He inclined towards "books of pleasure, as plays, which," he owns, "my nature was most earnest in; but at last, after seeing Chaucer, Dugdale's History of Paul's, Stow's London, Gesner, History of Kent, besides *Shakespeare*, Jonson, and Beaumont's Plays, I at last chose Dr. Fuller's Worthies, the Cabbala or Collections of Letters of State, and a little book, Délices de Hollande, with another little book or two, all of good use or serious pleasure, and Hudibras, both parts, the book now in greatest fashion for drollery, though I cannot, I confess, see enough where the wit lies." It is satisfactory to find, some six months later, an entry in his diary: "Home, calling for my new books, namely, Sir H. Spillman's Whole Glossary, Scapula's Lexicon, *and Shakespeare's plays*, which I have got money out of my stationer's bills to pay for." He had secured a Shakespeare at last, however he had given his original election to very inferior works.

Malone's statement, that "from the Restoration to 1682 no more than four plays of Shakespeare were performed by a principal company in London," is, of course, erroneous. But the Pepys manuscripts, from which so much information touching the stage of the seventeenth century has been derived, were not published until 1825; Malone died in 1812. In fact, 'Othello,' 'Henry IV.,' 'A

Midsummer Night's Dream,' 'Hamlet,' 'Romeo and Juliet,' 'Twelfth Night,' 'Henry VIII.,' 'Macbeth,' and 'King Lear,' were all presented, and from the original text, within some five or six years of the Restoration. The system of altering or "adapting" Shakespeare commenced, perhaps, on the 18th of February, 1662, with the 'Law against Lovers,' an arrangement by Davenant of 'Measure for Measure,' introducing much dialogue of his own, and the characters of Benedick and Beatrice borrowed, for the occasion, from 'Much Ado about Nothing.' 'Romeo and Juliet,' revived on the following 1st of March, was, for a while, played, now with a happy, now with a tragical, conclusion —the alteration being ascribed to the Hon. James Howard. No protest seems to have been uttered in regard to these mutilations of the poet; there was no cry of sacrilege! This literary cutting and wounding was deemed, indeed, a lawful occupation; the adapters were rather complimented upon their ingenuity than denounced for their Vandalism. Nor did Shakespeare suffer alone. The 'Two Noble Kinsmen' of Fletcher, materially altered by Davenant, appeared as the 'Rivals' at the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre in 1664. De Quincey, while warmly denouncing "the degenerate taste which substituted the caprices of Davenant, the rants of Dryden, or the filth of Tate, for the jewellery of Shakespeare," yet

charges the managers with responsibility, and acquits the public, who, he asserts, had no choice in the matter. It must be said, however, that the managers, who cater for the public, rather follow taste than lead it, and that players are very much what their patrons make them or would have them be. Many plays were brought back to the stage, after the reopening of the theatres, and performed in their original state. It may be assumed that they afterwards underwent alteration to meet the deteriorated tastes of the public. De Quincey, indeed, charges Malone with "the grossest folly" for accounting the numerous adaptations so many insults to Shakespeare, "whereas they expressed as much homage to his memory as if the unaltered dramas had been retained. The substance *was* retained," he proceeds, "the changes were merely concessions to the changing views of scenical propriety; sometimes, no doubt, made with a view to the revolution effected by Davenant at the Restoration in bringing *scenes* (in the painter's sense) upon the stage; sometimes also with a view to the altered fashions of the audience, during the suspension of the action, or perhaps to the introduction of after-pieces, by which, of course, the time was abridged for the main performance." This apology for the adaptation and garbling of the plays is certainly strained and disingenuous. The changes effected by Davenant, his fellows and

followers, are inaccurately described. They are for the most part grossly wanton and capricious. De Quincey himself denounces Nahum Tate's 'King Lear' as "the vilest of travesties," consecrating his name to "everlasting scorn." Yet the 'Lear' of Tate is no worse that the 'Macbeth' of Davenant, the 'Tempest' of Dryden and Davenant, or the 'Cymbeline' of Durfey. And Tate, it may be added, did not confine himself to 'Lear.' He also operated upon 'Coriolanus' and upon 'King Richard II.' Nor was he in his own time the "poor grub of literature" that De Quincey describes. It need hardly be mentioned that he succeeded Shadwell as poet laureate, and that, aided by Dr. Brady, he prepared the version of the Psalms that is still sung in many churches.

But the neglect of Shakespeare must surely have been very general, or Tate could not have written as he did in the dedication of his mangled edition of 'Lear.' He calmly mentions the original tragedy as "an obscure piece, recommended to his notice by a friend." Thereupon he discovered it to be "a heap of jewels unstrung and unpolished, yet so dazzling in their disorder that he soon perceived he had seized a treasure;" promptly he resolved, "out of zeal for all that remains of Shakespeare," to remodel the story. In like manner Ravenscroft, who, in 1672, had produced an adaptation of 'Titus Andronicus,'

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made it a subject of boasting that "none in all the author's works ever received greater alterations or additions, the language not only refined, but many scenes entirely new, besides most of the principal characters heightened and the plot much increased." In a new prologue, written expressly for the occasion, the adapter protested that he had "but winnowed Shakespeare's corn," declaring, indeed,

> So far he was from robbing him of his treasure,
> That he did add his own to make full measure.

The true adapter's tone is also preserved by Benjamin Victor, who, so late as 1762, produced a version of the 'Two Gentlemen of Verona.' "It is the general opinion," he writes, "that this comedy abounds with weeds. . . . . The rankest of those weeds I have endeavoured to remove," &c., &c. Further, it may be noted that Lord Shaftesbury, famous for his 'Characteristics,' 1711, complained of Shakespeare's "rude, unpolished style, and his antiquated phrase and wit."

Steevens, in support of his allegation that Shakespeare was very little read at one time, pointed out that "the author of the 'Tatler,' having occasion to quote a few lines out of Macbeth, was content to receive them from Davenant's alteration of that celebrated drama, in which almost every original beauty is either awkwardly disguised or arbitrarily

omitted." Steevens is clearly alluding to Steele, the founder and editor of the 'Tatler,' who, in No. 167 of that publication, attributes these lines to "Macbeth"—they proceed, of course, from Davenant's version of the tragedy:

> To-morrow, to-morrow, and to-morrow
> Creeps in a stealing pace from day to day,
> To the last moment of recorded time!
> And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
> To their eternal night! Out, out, short candle, &c.

But De Quincey supposes that Addison is referred to, and is at pains to explain that Addison had never read Shakespeare; that the author of 'Lear' was manifestly unknown to the author of 'Cato,' and totally beyond the reach of his sympathies. De Quincey, indeed, professed "by express examination" to have ascertained "the curious fact that Addison has never in one instance quoted or made any reference to Shakespeare." Such an assertion could not be maintained, as De Quincey himself, at a later date, was brought to admit. Almost the only objection to Tate's maltreatment of Shakespeare was indeed raised by Addison. In No. 40 of the 'Spectator' he wrote: "'King Lear' is an admirable tragedy as Shakespeare wrote it, but, as it is reformed according to the chimerical notion of poetical justice, in my humble opinion it has lost half its beauty." But, if Addison's ignorance of Shakespeare had been as com-

plete as De Quincey pronounced it, would not general ignorance of Shakespeare have been thereby implied? Is it probable that the public addressed by the 'Spectator' and the 'Tatler' were more enlightened on such a subject than were Addison and Steele? A writer in the 'Tatler,' No. 8—probably Steele himself — is even found exhorting "people of condition" to encourage the representation of the noble characters of Shakespeare, by way of amending the "low gratifications" of the stage of that time. Were dramas of a high class, he argues, "more acceptable to the taste of the town, men who have genius would bend their studies to excel in them." There was at this period no enthusiasm on behalf of Shakespeare; but Addison and Steele certainly presented themselves as, in a placid way, the admirers and advocates of the poet—placing him on a par, say, with Lee, Rowe, or Southern.

The printing-press, as a means of testing popularity, cannot be safely depended upon in relation to early books. The collected plays of Shakespeare formed an expensive work, and the book-buying public of the seventeenth century must certainly have been limited. The first folio edition of the plays was published in 1623, the second in 1632, the third in 1664, the fourth in 1685. It is, of course, impossible to state the number of

copies comprised in these editions. The expense of publication in folio probably interfered with the diffusion of the book, while the years of civil war no doubt weighed heavily upon the publishing trade as upon literature in general. But can it be said that these four editions in sixty years demonstrate the popularity of Shakespeare? Within a similar period there seem to have been as many editions issued of the works alike of Jonson and of Beaumont and Fletcher, quite as costly to print as were Shakespeare's; while it may be noted that of Sidney's 'Arcadia' there were twelve editions published between 1590 and 1674. It was not until nearly a century after Shakespeare's death that there appeared an octavo edition of his works. This was edited by Rowe, and was followed by Pope's quarto edition in 1725; by Theobald's edition of 1733; Hanmer's of 1744; Warburton's of 1745; Blair's of 1753; Johnson's of 1765; Capell's of 1767—the list need hardly be continued. There has since been no lack of appreciation of Shakespeare, so far as publication and commentaries are concerned; edition after edition has appeared, and the poet has undergone the most searching analysis and criticism. But have Shakespeare's earlier editors—such as Pope and Johnson, for instance—really enhanced his fame? According to Schlegel, it has been due to the labours of the commentators that

foreign opinion so long depreciated Shakespeare's plays as "monstrous productions which could only have been given to the world by a disordered imagination in a barbarous age." Even among Germans, "Lessing was the first to speak of Shakespeare in a becoming tone." David Hume's description of the poet and his period—"Born in a rude age, and educated in the lowest manner, without any instruction either from the world or from books"—had been generally adopted on the Continent: Hume's History being "the English work with which foreigners of every country are best acquainted."

But there came at last a remarkable change in the point of view and in the tone of the critics and the commentators. They now spoke of the poet with "bated breath and whispering humbleness;" they judged him—so far as it can be said that they judged him at all—no longer looking down upon him as from a superior position, but looking up at him most reverently the while they humbled themselves and crouched at his feet. Hallam ascribes "the apotheosis of Shakespeare," as he calls it, to "what has been styled a frigid and tasteless generation, the age of George II.," and asserts that "the idolatry of Shakespeare has been carried so far of late years that Drake, and perhaps greater authorities, have been unwilling to acknowledge any faults in his plays—an extravagance rather

derogatory to the critic than honourable to the poet." No doubt the arrival of Garrick upon the scene restored certain of Shakespeare's works to the list of acting dramas. But the enthusiasm stirred by the actor must not be mistaken for admiration of the poet. Theatres are crowded rather because of the players than because of the plays. As Hazlitt writes: "It would be ridiculous to suppose that any one ever went to see Hamlet or Othello represented by Kean or Kemble; we go to see Kean or Kemble in Hamlet or Othello." And Lamb, contrasting the impressions obtained at a theatre with those derived from reading, observes: "We are apt not only to sink the playwriter in the consideration which we pay to the actor, but even to identify in our minds, in a perverse manner, the actor with the character which he represents. It is difficult for a frequent playgoer to disembarrass the idea of Hamlet from the voice and person of Mr. K. We speak of Lady Macbeth while we are in reality thinking of Mrs. Siddons." Lamb notes, too, a certain levelling quality as in the nature of histrionic exhibitions. They, as it were, handicap the great poet and the mere playwright. "Who does not speak indifferently of the Gamester and of Macbeth as fine stage performances, and praise the Mrs. Beverley in the same way as the Lady Macbeth of Mrs. S.? Belvidera and Calista, and Isabella

and Euphrasia, are they less liked than Imogen, or than Juliet, or than Desdemona? are they not spoken of and remembered in the same way? Is not the female performer as great (as they call it) in one as in the other? Did not Garrick shine, and was he not ambitious of shining, in every drawling tragedy that his wretched day produced, the productions of the Hills, and the Murphys, and the Browns? and shall he have that honour to dwell in our minds for ever as an inseparable concomitant with Shakespeare?" Lamb is moreover disposed to deny to Garrick the merit of being even an admirer of Shakespeare. "A true lover of his excellencies he certainly was not; for would any true lover of them have admitted into his matchless scenes such ribald trash as Tate, and Cibber, and the rest of them, that 'with their darkness durst affront his light,' have foisted into the acting plays of Shakespeare? . . . . Yet I doubt not he delivered this vulgar stuff with as much anxiety of emphasis as any of the genuine parts, and, for acting, it is as well calculated as any."

Lamb and Hazlitt may certainly be credited with that "idolatry of Shakespeare" of which Hallam has made mention, that complete recognition of his supremacy, that unhesitating preference of him to all the world, which has become the faith of these later times, but which scarcely existed throughout the seven-

teenth and great part of the eighteenth centuries, and of which Addison and his contemporaries assuredly knew but little. Lamb held that Shakespeare's plays were incompatible with stage representation—were less calculated for performance than the productions of almost any other dramatist whatever; "their distinguishing excellence is a reason that they should be so." Hazlitt asserted that poetry and the stage do not agree together. "The attempt to reconcile them fails not only of effect but of decorum." He was further of opinion that the representation of Shakespeare upon the stage, even by the best actor, was "an abuse of the genius of the poet." He concludes: "The reader of the plays of Shakespeare is almost always disappointed in seeing them acted; and, for our own parts, we should never go to see them acted if we could help it."

While, therefore, apathy or imperception in regard to the merits of Shakespeare has led to the ruthless mangling of his plays, under the pretext of suiting them to later tastes and requirements, enthusiasm on his behalf would thus deprive him of stage representation altogether. The poet has been held to be at once too good and too bad for performance. The attitude of the general public meantime has been one of acquiescence in both opinions—the result perhaps of indifference. The playgoers have not resented

the tamperings or tinkerings of the adapters, have been no sticklers for the original text and have indeed occasionally evinced a decided preference for the stage or acting editions of the poet. In regard to certain of the plays, it has only been in quite recent times that there has been rejection of the changes and interpolations of the adapters. Mr. Macready and Mr. Phelps have shown more respect for the integrity of the poet than any of their more illustrious predecessors. De Quincey has urged: "Even for the vilest alteration it ought in candour to be considered that possession is nine points of the law. He who would not have introduced was often obliged to retain." But the players—who can only be held responsible, however, when they happened to be managers as well as players—were long willing enough both to retain and introduce. Garrick, adding a last dying speech of his own contriving, otherwise restored the text of 'Macbeth,' and suppressed Davenant's alterations, much to the amazement of Quin. "What does he mean?" cried the veteran tragedian, reading Garrick's announcement of the production of the play *as originally written*; "Pray, don't I play Macbeth as written by Shakespeare?" But Garrick is chargeable with many sins against Shakespeare. He retained Cibber's 'Richard' and Tate's 'Lear.' He mangled 'Hamlet,' in deference, presumably, to Voltaire's objec-

tions; he maltreated 'Cymbeline,' 'Romeo and Juliet,' and the 'Winter's Tale.' He turned the 'Tempest' and the 'Midsummer Night's Dream' into operas, and reduced the 'Taming of a Shrew' into a farce. John Kemble also, while professing extraordinary veneration for Shakespeare, garbled several of the plays, and acted in many very corrupt versions. He, too, retained Cibber's 'Richard' and Tate's 'Lear,' with, in addition, the 'Tempest' of Davenant and Dryden. The 'Coriolanus' in which he appeared was a blending of Shakespeare and Thomson. "The name of Shakespeare," as Hallam writes, "is the greatest in our literature—is the greatest in all literature." The esteem in which the poet is held by his countrymen is, perhaps, best demonstrated by the multiplicity of editions of his works, by the endless processes of comment, elucidation, and laudation to which he is still subjected. The editions of course find purchasers and are read—by some. The students of Shakespeare, indeed, constitute a large class. To a larger public Shakespeare is a book which "no gentleman's library should be without"—a book which everybody is supposed to have read and enjoyed. Ignorance on the part of an average Englishman—not one of the student class—concerning Ben Jonson or Beaumont and Fletcher, Webster, Ford, or Massinger, is deemed excusable enough; but it is taken for granted that

people in general have some acquaintance with Shakespeare, and duly value and venerate him. There is some reason to question, however, if the public do really know and prize the poet in regard to whom they are conventionally credited with almost a superstitious devotion. At recent performances of Shakespeare's plays it has been observed that even the sitters in the best seats, whose social position entitled them to be accounted properly informed and cultivated upon the subject, were profoundly ignorant touching the events represented on the scene. Does Hamlet fight Laertes? Is Ophelia going to drown herself? Does the Queen drink the poison? Is Hamlet killed at last? These and such as these were the questions whispered about in stalls and boxes. And so, at a performance of 'Macbeth,' a very well-dressed gentleman expressed himself much perplexed at the apparition of "blood-boltered Banquo" in the banquet scene. "I always thought the ghost was in Hamlet," he said. He was gravely troubled.

Playgoers have always been pleasure-seekers; there is little difference in this respect between the lieges of Elizabeth and the subjects of Victoria, although the theatrical pleasures of the past may be deemed of more worthy quality than are the dramatic entertainments of the present. The stage exists but to gratify the public. As Johnson wrote in his famous prologue:

> The stage but echoes back the public voice;
> The drama's laws the drama's patrons give,
> For we that live to please must please to live.

The general public have flocked to the performance of Shakespeare's plays when some great actor, or an actor believed by many to be great, has roused curiosity concerning his impersonation of the poet's more famous characters; or when, under the pretext of illustrating Shakespeare, stage pageantry and spectacle have occupied the scene. Some few, perhaps, indifferent to the teaching of Lamb and Hazlitt, may have attended performances of Shakespeare, loving the poet for himself alone, and simply because they were performances of Shakespeare. But playgoers of this class do not form a very influential body. Occasionally "the wild vicissitudes of Taste" have come to the rescue —Taste being recognised as but another name for Fashion. The Historian of the Stage from 1660 to 1830 tells us of the season of 1737–8: "Few plays were acted about this time save those of Shakespeare," the performances being presented expressly by desire and under the patronage of "several ladies of quality." Other ladies of quality, it appears, formed themselves into a society to support the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher. Fielding's farce, the 'Historical Register for 1736,' concludes with an appeal: "And you, ladies, whether you be Shakespeare's ladies

or Beaumont and Fletcher's ladies, I hope you will make allowances," &c. But this fancy of the ladies of quality did not endure, was unattended by permanent result. Fashion was of service, however, to Garrick, when "from the polite ends of Westminster the most elegant company flocked to Goodman's Fields, insomuch that from Temple Bar the whole way was covered with a string of coaches;" when Pope was drawn from his retreat at Twickenham, and Lord Orrery said, "I am afraid the young man will be spoiled, for he will have no competitor." And Fashion was of considerable assistance to the Kembles and the Keans. On the other hand, it was a frequent cause of lamentation to Macready that he could not obtain the countenance of Fashion for the most perfect performances of Shakespeare ever seen upon our stage. Retiring with severe loss from his second venture as a manager, he records in his diary: "Tennant talked to me much about bringing the Fashion to the theatre. I doubt the possibility." And it was not to be.

It is by no means satisfactory to reflect that what should be a question of fine art is in truth but a matter of fashion—that the rise or the fall of Shakespeare is really dependent upon the whims of the moment, or the vagaries of taste:

> Taste, that eternal wanderer, which flies
> From heads to ears, and now from ears to eyes,

or from plays to operas, and from operas to pantomimes. But the consolation remains—if it is to be accounted a consolation—that the present can compare with the past; that things are now very much what they have always been; and that any neglect of Shakespeare now prevailing is not simply of to-day's date, or a new invention on the part of the modern public.

CHAPTER VI.

THE READER OF PLAYS.

THE world moving on leaves behind it various employments and professions as so much mere lumber or litter, useless and exhausted, not worth caring for any longer or carrying further. No doubt alchemists and stage-coachmen, postilions and astrologers, arquebusiers and barber-surgeons, chair-porters and knights-templars, were of value and significance in their day; but society and civilisation have managed by degrees to outgrow them and dispense with their services; and they are now as the extinct animals, whose remains, occasionally discovered, reveal an antediluvian state of existence, or as dim figures derelict upon a distant shore: nor time nor tide waited for them, and the ship that erewhile bore them has long since sailed away, forsaking them, with all its canvas spread.

Among these effete occupations may be classed the office of Reader of Plays—but by this term ordinary reading of plays for the

purposes of amusement is by no means signified. In the eighteenth century the last new play secured as many readers as the last new novel finds now-a-days; and there were then many more new plays than new novels. No one reads plays at the present date, probably for the excellent reason that there are none, or so very few, to read. Modern plays are rarely published, or are printed almost exclusively for the use of the performers, and are addressed solely to theatre-goers: they seek no public among the readers of books. In the last century plays formed the most admired light literature; and the country ladies and gentlemen, who could only at long intervals contrive to visit London, were punctually supplied with copies of the plays as fast as they were produced, and so informed themselves of the proceedings, recreations, and topics of the town. Few could now be found anxious to peruse such a work, let us say, as Mr. Moore's doleful tragedy of 'The Gamester;' yet, immediately upon its performance at Drury Lane in 1753, a copy of the play was duly forwarded to the amiable Mrs. Delany in Ireland. She writes, "I have read and wept over the 'Gamester.' The characters are pretty, the language poor, but some pretty strokes in it, and I think it a very pretty play to be at this time represented."

The Reader of Plays was an officer

appointed by the theatrical manager to read and pronounce on his behalf concerning the merits of all dramatic writings submitted to him as worthy of being produced upon his stage. The publisher is still assisted by a reader of manuscripts, who tenders advice as to their fitness for publication. Formerly the manager had likewise his reader, engaged for the season, or for a term of years, and paid a regular salary for his services. Who first filled this post it would be hard to say; the necessity of such an appointment was not perhaps immediately perceptible, or was a matter of gradual growth. As plays accumulated upon the manager's hands, or he found himself insufficiently skilled or lettered to decide as to their qualities, he was probably compelled to seek counsel of his friends, and at last to retain permanently the aid of a competent adviser. That this official Reader of Plays was viewed at one time as a personage of very considerable importance is manifested by the publication some fifty years ago of a pamphlet entitled, 'Epistolary Remonstrance to Thomas Morton, Esq., Dramatic Writer and Professed Critic and Reader to Captain Polhill and His Majesty's Servants of Drury Lane Theatre.' Captain Polhill, it may be noted, was a gentleman of fortune, who for a term became a manager, employing Morton, the dramatist, as his Reader of Plays. It may seem strange that the author of the

pamphlet should have treated as a subject of public interest what was really a private arrangement. But the theatres then enjoyed peculiar privileges in the nature of monopolies, and this fact, it was thought, justified intervention in the matter on behalf of the public and their rights. Moreover, the author sought redress because of the individual grievances he had endured. He had written a play for which he vainly sought representation; he disputed the competency of the tribunal deciding against him, and claimed to be heard upon the question. He declared that all legitimate dramas worthy of the stage should have a chance of representation, and complained that so far was this from being the case that the theatre was viewed merely as private property, without regard to the rights of the public: the proprietor for the time being appointing a person to examine all plays proffered for performance, who, guided at best by regard for the supposed interests of his employer, dealt with dramas far more with reference to their effects on the treasury than to their real merits. This arrangement, which in these times would hardly be deemed open to rebuke or, indeed, remark, was denounced as both humiliating and monstrously unjust: "for even supposing the chosen examiner to be a man of confessedly first-rate taste and judgment, he may still have his partialities and prejudices; and

allowing further that he may be exempt even from these, still he is but an individual, and it is not to be expected, from the most accomplished and immaculate on the score of integrity, that he should be capable of being just in his examination of all the varieties and productions which officially come before him." Mr. Morton's competency was sharply questioned, and it was contended that the author of such plays as he had produced, and to which he owed his reputation and his office, "must necessarily be deficient in those qualities which constitute a competent critic of pieces of a high order; and, therefore, that the injustice of leaving dramatic authors without a tribunal at which they can be adequately appreciated," was then, so far as Drury Lane was concerned, "in the fulness of pernicious existence." The plays of Mr. Morton were next subjected to severe criticism, and condemnation passed upon his decisions as to the dramas of others submitted to his consideration. "No man," proceeds the pamphleteer, "is free to utter opinions which carry judgment without appeal. With your censure a work is all but undone; for a knowledge of such rejection creates prejudice with the rival theatre, infected with similar pollution, and where three hundred prior offerings take precedence in the perusal of some similar Reader to the Household." Then, lest advice should be tendered him to print his play and

shame the fools, he writes, "To seek public notice and indemnity through the *dernier ressort* of publication is certain earnest of a deadborn poem and irrecoverable expense. Every work of dramatic merit we expect to see on the stage, and when one is offered to us at the hands of the booksellers we receive it with suspicion and read it with prejudice; for the mode of its introduction implies theatrical reprobation, and, without considering the possible incompetency, dishonesty, or temerity of managerial judgment, we take it for granted that errors exist somewhere, in word or plan, which, although imperceptible to us, render the outcast unworthy of representation. From this impression not even the fame of their defrauded writers could rescue 'Werner' and 'Fazio,' till chance produced them on the stage, when their success gave the positive lie to the opinions of managers' own readers. If such then was the fate of those distinguished men what has the dishonoured play of an obscurer author to expect? Or had your own works been only known in print, where had been the reputation of Mr. Thomas Morton?"

It may be concluded from this rather acrimonious "Epistolary Remonstrance" that plays were no longer printed for the sake of the reading public. Already novels had risen to greater importance; dramas were now dependent upon the patronage of the

theatre-goers, and needed representation upon the stage, otherwise "mere oblivion" was their doom. Of the letter-writer and his neglected play nothing further can be stated. Probably he remains to this day an unacted dramatist for all his contemptuous opinion of a playwright so skilled and so successful as the author of 'Speed the Plough' and 'A Cure for the Heartache.' Underrating those productions, he was very likely to overvalue his own.

The Elizabethan dramatists seem to have been curiously indifferent as to the fate of their plays, and generally abandoned all care of them after selling them for representation to a manager or a company of actors. Ben Jonson is usually credited with exceptional conduct in superintending the production of his works in 1616—he was much derided by certain critics for bestowing upon such trivialities as plays the ambitious title of "Works." Few of his contemporaries showed equal regard for their reputation. It is probable, however, that the poets usually sold the copyright of their plays as well as the right to perform them. Mr. Payne Collier suggests that the printing of plays might have been prejudicial to the interests of the managers, "not merely because public curiosity would thereby to a certain extent be gratified, but because rival companies would thus be enabled to represent their pieces." Plays, however,

were frequently printed without the sanction of their authors and with piratical intentions. Heywood speaks of sundry of his plays as "accidentally" printed, and "therefore so corrupt and mangled, copied only by the ear, that I have been as unable to know them as ashamed to challenge them." On another occasion he explains why so few of the two hundred and twenty plays he had been concerned in producing, (having had in them either "an entire hand or at least a main finger,") had ever been published. "True it is," he writes, "that my plays are not exposed unto the world in volumes to bear the titles of "Works" (as others): one reason is that many of them, by shifting and change of companies, have been negligently lost; others of them are still retained in the hands of some actors who think it against their peculiar profit to have them come into print; and a third that it never was any great ambition in me to be in this kind voluminously read." Occasionally it was necessary to bribe the printer to abstain from publishing some particular play. The aid of the Court of Chancery was not invoked in those days to restrain printer or publisher by means of injunction: authors and managers were left to buy off the offender, dealing privately with him as best they might. The diary of Henslowe the manager contains an entry: "Lent unto Robert Shaw, March 18, 1599, to give unto

the printer to stay the printing of 'Patient Grissell,' 40*s*." This was the play of which Chettle, Dekker, and Haughton were the joint authors. Clearly there existed a play-reading public in those times. Prynne, in the Epistle Dedicatory of his "Histriomastix," 1633, complains of "above forty thousand play-books printed within two years (as stationers inform me), they being now more vendible than the choicest sermons." He must mean, of course, forty thousand copies of plays, and not forty thousand distinct plays. There is no evidence, however, of the existence at this time of an official Reader of Plays in the service of the managers, who proceeded in the matter presumably upon their own discretion and judgment.

Mr. John Jackson, actor, manager, and dramatist, in his 'History of the Scottish Stage,' published in 1793, has described the methods of treating authors followed by David Garrick at Drury Lane, and by John Rich, the manager of Covent Garden. Mr. Jackson held the rejected dramatist to be the inveterate foe of the manager. "He is either instantly denounced as a most stupid blockhead, or, being a writer himself, is accused as a jealous, purloining scribbler; and consequently unfit to fill the situation in which he is placed." Garrick in his dealings with authors was tremblingly alive to the dangers of offending them, and of their seeking vengeance in

lampoons, pasquinades, and severe criticism. His dread of ridicule and satire was singularly vivid. He was cautious therefore, complaisant of manner, avoiding as much as possible any direct decision. It is not clear, however, that his temporising, diplomatic demeanour was really of much service to him. Returning a play to its author he would say, with tricks of voice and gesture acquired, it was alleged, in imitation of Lord Mansfield: "I do assure you, sir, I read your play with a good deal of pleasure. It is not destitute of merit. Some alteration in the arrangement of the scenes, and a few additions to the last act to render the *dénouement* a little more dramatic, which might be pointed out . . . And then I really think . . . Hey? Why now, brother George, is not that your opinion? Hey? Do you think we might not risk it?" This was to George Garrick, the manager's faithful assistant, always present upon these occasions. Then turning again to the author, he resumed in an altered tone: "However, sir, if it had all the merit in the world it would be impossible for me to make room for it at present, or for even one or two seasons to come. At some future period, when I am relieved from the engagements I have made, I might perhaps find an opening; and, as I observed, sir, with the alterations I could point out I know not but your piece might merit a trial. I am sorry I should be so

situated at present. But prior engagements, you know, must be kept. Good morning, sir. John, show the gentleman out." Relieved of his visitors "with all those flourishes with which his nature was so plentifully endowed," he promptly forbade the door to be opened to them again, "leaving the result of his *half yea and half nay* declarations to the chapter of accidents. In all probability before the specified period came round, from inclination, situation, or circumstances, the parties were differently disposed, and, consequently, peaceably and speciously got rid of." Occasionally, however, "the complaisant expressions of the manager were construed into a promise, which, after a variety of delays and excuses, he was obliged to make good, and by that means compromise with the claimant at the expense of his judgment." This was especially the case when the author was supported by any degree of personal interest. Patrons existed in those days, and could bring to bear considerable influence upon managers and players. Cibber, mentioning "the persecution of bad authors" as among "the more disagreeable distresses" of theatrical management, refers also to "the fine gentlemen authors," and "the recommendation or, rather, imposition of some great persons whom it was not prudence to disoblige." But the plays thus forced upon the stage were apt to be quickly driven from it again. The short-lived drama was

forthwith published, with a preface abusing the actors for obstructing the success of it, "while," adds Cibber, "the town publicly damned us for our private civility." And he tells of a solemn bard, who, like Bayes, wrote only for fame and reputation, on the second night's performance of his tragedy, "marching in a stately full-bottomed periwig into the lobby of the house with a lady of condition in his hand," only to receive the mortifying intelligence from the box-keeper, "'Sir, we have dismissed; there was not company enough to pay for the candles.'"

Rich, famous as a harlequin and successful as a manager, was very rude of manner and grossly illiterate. He always affected ignorance of the name of the person addressing him, he took snuff frequently and in large pinches, and was fond of stroking a tabby cat which usually sat upon his knee. Jackson relates that one night he was playing cards with the Covent Garden manager, assisted by his daughter Miss Rich, and his friend Mr. Bencraft, when a gentleman was announced, who, declaring his business to be of importance, was forthwith admitted.

"Well, Mister," said Rich, "what may your pleasure be?"

The visitor proved to be a dramatic author.

"Mr. Rich," he replied rather sharply, "three months ago I left a manuscript play with you. You assured me that you would

read it the first opportunity. I cannot help thinking that you have had ample time to read my play and to make up your mind about it. You will excuse my anxiety upon the subject. But I have called now, as I have called many times before, to learn the fate of my play."

"Why, look you, Mister," said Rich, "I have no leisure now to read manuscripts. When my new pantomime is ready, I may, perhaps, get a look at them. There they lie, a whole regiment of them—opera, farce, and blank verse. You shall have your turn—all in good time. I dare say, Mister, about the end of next season I shall be able to give you my opinion."

"As that is the case, Mr. Rich," observed the dramatist with some warmth, "I beg you will return me the manuscript; and I will not again break in upon your repose or thus unseasonably interrupt your amusement."

"Oh, to be sure, Mister," said Rich, "I have no wish to retain your play. Here, Thomas"—this was to the servant—"look in that drawer near the window, and give Mr. What's-his-name his play. You will know it again I suppose, Mister?" Then, turning to the cardplayers, he asked, "How stands the game? Seven to five and hearts trumps. There's the deuce. Now, Mister my partner, try what you can do."

But the search for the play proved to be vain.

"Sir, my play is not here," cried the disconcerted author at last.

"Is it not? Why, then, pick and choose, Mister," said Rich coolly. "There's plenty of them. Suit yourself. Turn them over and over, and take which you like best. A thousand to one but you'll find it better than your own, Mister, and answer your purpose quite as well."

The author retired, feeling that in his person dramatic literature had been much outraged.

A story of like purport has been related of Sheridan, whose indolence and recklessness as a manager involved him in frequent disputes with the dramatists of his time. They not only complained of the loss or neglect of their manuscripts, but "boldly asserted that their plots, their incidents, their conversations, were pilfered and brought out in such shapes that the parent only recognised his offspring by some unmistakable feature." Sheridan satirised this accusation in the "Critic" when Sir Fretful is made to declare that he will never, while he lives, send a play to Drury Lane—the manager "writes himself." And he adds, "a dexterous plagiarist may do anything. Why, sir, for aught I know, he might take out some of the best things in my tragedy, and put them into his own comedy."

Sheridan's management of Drury Lane

Theatre ended with its total destruction by fire on February 24th, 1809. The new theatre opened on October 10, 1812, under the direction of a committee of noblemen and gentlemen. Lord Byron, who had joined this committee, had been anxious that Tom Moore should be one of his colleagues, and thus wrote to him upon the subject: "I wished and wish you were in the committee with all my heart. It seems so hopeless a business, that the company of a friend would be quite consoling. . . . All my new functions consist in listening to the despair of Cavendish Bradshaw, the hopes of Kinnaird, the wishes of Lord Essex, the complaints of Whitbread, and the calculations of Peter Moore—all of which and whom seem totally at variance. C. Bradshaw wants to light the theatre with gas, which may perhaps (if the vulgar be believed) poison half the audience and all the *dramatis personæ*. Essex has endeavoured to persuade Kean not to get drunk; the consequence of which is that he has never been sober since. Kinnaird, with equal success, would have convinced Raymond [the stage-manager] that he, the said Raymond, had too much salary. Whitbread wants us to assess the pit another sixpence—a d—d insidious proposition, which will end in an O. P combustion. To crown all, Robins, the auctioneer, has the impudence to be displeased because he has no dividend. The villain is a proprietor of shares and

a long-lunged orator in the meetings. I hear he has prophesied our incapacity," &c. &c.

Lord Byron has further stated that when he belonged to the Drury Lane Committee, and was one of the sub-committee of management, "the number of plays upon the shelves was about five hundred." Conceiving that amongst these there must be some of merit, in person and by proxy he caused an investigation. "I do not think," he writes, "that of those which I saw there was one which could be conscientiously tolerated. There never were such things as most of them! . . . Then the scenes I had to go through! The authors and authoresses, and the wild Irishmen, the people from Brighton, from Blackwall, from Chatham, from Cheltenham, from Dublin, from Dundee—who came in upon me! to all of whom it was proper to give a civil answer, and a hearing, and a reading. Mrs. Glover's father, an Irish dancing-master of sixty years, calling upon me to request to play Archer, dressed in silk stockings on a frosty morning to show his legs (which were certainly good and Irish for his age, and had been still better); Miss Emma Somebody, with a play entitled 'The Bandit of Bohemia,' or some such title or production; Mr. O'Higgins, then resident at Richmond, with an Irish tragedy, in which the unities could not fail to be observed, for the protagonist was chained by the leg to a

pillar during the chief part of the performance. He was a wild man of a savage appearance, and the difficulty of *not* laughing at him was only to be got over by reflecting upon the probable consequences of such cachinnation. As I am really a civil and polite person, and *do* hate giving pain when it can be avoided, I sent them up to Douglas Kinnaird, who is a man of business, and sufficiently ready with a negative—and left them to settle with him."

Tom Dibdin, the contriver of innumerable pantomimes, and for some years prompter at Drury Lane Theatre, seems also to have rendered assistance as Reader of Plays, altering and adapting them for performance, and communicating with their authors. Like functions appear to have been performed at Covent Garden by Frederick Reynolds the dramatist, who writes of his office—"What was the name of my situation, however, I never could learn. Some called me whipper-in to the tragedians," many "ferret to the painters and composers," and others "maid of all work" to the manager, who himself called me *thinker*, at the same time kindly allowing me, without injury to my morals, to be a *free* thinker. But though I cannot attach a name to the officer, I can say something of the office, which certainly was no sinecure, having to suggest or to execute through the whole year any project that might be conducive to the success of the treasury."

Mr. Alfred Bunn, nicknamed "the poet Bunn," whose experience of theatrical affairs had been extensive—a spirited impresario himself, he had served a long apprenticeship to management as the lieutenant now of Elliston and now of Captain Polhill—in his book entitled 'The Stage, both Before and Behind the Curtain, from Observations taken on the Spot,' has recorded his trials in regard to the plays submitted to him for production. "As respects authors," he writes, "a great source of perplexity to an *entrepreneur*, the difficulty is not so frightful by any means in dealing with those of acknowledged reputation and consequent utility as with those who are candidates for the glory of seeing their works on the stage and themselves in print. Of some hundreds of pieces sent promiscuously by unknown writers to the manager, during my appearance in that capacity, there was but one deemed fit for representation, and amongst those submitted by men of note many were found to be fraught with danger and were dismissed accordingly." Further Mr. Bunn published a list of plays submitted to Mr. Morton, the official reader and examiner of plays to Drury Lane, with his report upon their merits and demerits. Certain of the items may be here reproduced:—

"*Paired Off*—The plan, characters, and dialogue of the piece are by no means objectionable, but I fear it is not up to the mark as

to the breadth necessary for a one-act piece. The part intended for Mrs. Glover is tame, and what she could or would do nothing with.

"*Nicolas Pedrossa*—Sad stuff—to be returned.

"*The Adventurers*—Not worth adventuring—sure to be damned.

"*Perversion*—Cannot be acted.

"*Theory and Practice*—The subject of this play is paper money, but the author's MS. can never be changed into cash.

"*The Way to get Mad*—May be returned to Mr. Heaven-knows-who, for I can't even make out the author's name.

"*Whitefeet*—This piece is quite unfitted for representation.

"*The Iron Shroud*—Avoid it.

"*Panthea*—Read the last page. Six people stab themselves in less than six minutes—four of them eunuchs!

"*Edelbert*—Respectably written; but of what use to Drury Lane would be a respectable Saxon tragedy?

"*The Assassin*—Is unskilful and unavailable.

"*Imbio, or the Requital*—Nonsense.

"*The Refusal*—No better.

"*Prince of Naples*—Won't do.

"*The Two Catherines*—The perusal took me more time to understand than half-a-dozen better ones, and, after all, the riddle was not worth finding out. It cannot be used.

"*One Fool makes Many*—The author, I am sorry to say, is one of the many.

"*The Dead Alive*—Quite hopeless.

"*Swamp Hall*—This piece I have either read or seen before, as all the circumstances are familiar to me. Won't do at all.

"*The Baby*—Hasty and trivial. The inviting thing is the title, which I think a good one; but the business is common-place.

"*The Podesta*—This play could not advantageously be acted. The plot is complicated—to an audience inexplicable; it has all the confusion of an Italian feud, but none of the grandeur of a Frisco or a Foscari. There is some poetry, some dramatic power, and some dramatic situation; but not enough to balance the defects.

"*By the King's Order*—A bustling affair, but very dangerous.

"*Marriage à la Mode*—As far as embodying the pictures of Hogarth, the piece is well contrived; but the dialogue is very dull, unrelieved by the least gleam of gaiety. As a drama it is very very humble.

"*Women as they are*—Very bad."

Mr. Bunn concludes: "it may therefore readily be believed that when some hundreds of pieces of the quality described are submitted to the decision of the manager of a theatre, the task of deciding, to say nothing of reading, is quite harassing enough."

Macready, undertaking the management of

Covent Garden Theatre in 1837, enters in his journal: "Wrote to Kenny, offering him the office of Reader, at 3*l.* per week"—a salary which is certainly of modest amount. Kenny is now chiefly known as the author of 'Raising the Wind,' but he was in his time a very popular playwright and adapter. In later years Macready was assisted in like manner by Mr. Serle, also a dramatist of some note formerly, if his plays are no longer freshly remembered. Plays still poured into the theatre, much to the perplexity of the manager, when he ventured to examine them on his own behalf. Here are some entries in his diaries in relation to the subject:—"Looked over two plays, which it was not possible to read, hard as I tried. They are utter trash, and it is really trying to one's patience to lose so much time over such worthless, hopeless stuff. I cannot longer afford the time." "Looked through the play of 'The Sculptor,' and found it a most outrageous absurdity. Wrote a note and addressed it, with the MS. of the author, to be left at the stage door." "Two or three persons called, one with a play on the subject of imprisonment for debt, which he did not choose to leave, as the subject was at present popular!" "Received a parcel from the undaunted Mr ——, who will not be denied; he sends his thrice-rejected play as a present!" "Visited by a lady . . . a writer of seven tragedies and various farces; this is

one of the many who waste life and paper in their hopeless mockery of employment!"

Fitzball, the dramatist, for some seasons officiated as Reader of Plays at Drury Lane Theatre. He writes: "I have read as many as two hundred different pieces during a season, not one of which could possibly have suited the establishment; but whenever I saw the slightest chance I always most strenuously urged the manager to peruse it."

During Mr. Charles Kean's period of management he enjoyed the assistance of the late Mr. J. W. Cole, otherwise Calcraft, as his Reader of Plays. Mr. Cole is further known as the author of the 'Life of Charles Kean.'

Such an office as that of Reader of Plays has now become unnecessary, for the sound reason that there are no plays to read; or perhaps it should rather be said because the modern system of theatrical management is opposed to the production of new plays. These are the days of long runs, when the entertainments of the stage know little variety. The play of to-night will be repeated to-morrow, and so on, week after week, month after month, and even year after year. Of course manuscripts are sent to managers, for writers of plays are usually sanguine and persistent, armed with a lively faith in the superiority of their own efforts; but the works thus tendered for perusal are little regarded, or often indeed very contumeliously treated.

One manager, expressly to discourage aspirants, advertised that he would only receive plays from members of the Dramatic Authors' Society. And the new plays now produced are usually the result of negotiation with an established playwright. It need hardly be said that this is not the way to create or to stimulate the growth of new dramatists; and as a matter of fact we have had no new dramatist for some years past.

Actors have always been accounted very bad judges of plays, and managers and their official readers have often been much mistaken in their appraisement of the works submitted to their consideration. Garrick's repeated errors in regard both to the rejection and the acceptance of new plays exposed him to much ridicule; and in the 'Mémoires Secrets de Bachaumont,' an apposite story of misjudgment and bungling is related at the expense of that august body, the *Comédie Française*. An obscure author proffered the comedians a little one-act piece in verse, entitled 'Le Droit du Seigneur.' After much humble solicitation on his part they consented to read it. They pronounced it execrable. He protested against this decision; his comedy had been admired by many persons of taste and quality—had even won the good opinion of M. de Voltaire. The actors treated him with contempt: he had been misled by the applause of people who knew nothing about the

matter; M. de Voltaire had but jested. The author was promptly dismissed amidst the jeers and sneers of the assembly. Presently M. de Voltaire offered the *Comédie* his little play, 'L'Ecueil du Sage.' It was received with the greatest respect; it was read with admiration and delight; M. de Voltaire was proclaimed the benefactor of the comedians. It was certainly mortifying to them afterwards to discover that the comedy of 'L'Ecueil du Sage' was only 'Le Droit du Seigneur' with a new name. It was felt that they had justified the rude caricature which represented the tribunal of the Théâtre Français as a group of barbers' blocks adorned with perukes. In justice to the comedians, however, it should be added that M. de Voltaire's play did not please the public by any means when it was subsequently presented upon the stage.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ILLEGITIMATE DRAMA.

Lord Byron has described his efforts as a member of the Drury Lane Committee of Management to "bring back the legitimate drama," referring, of course, to tragedy and comedy of the conventional five-act pattern. The theatrical public of 1815 had betrayed great lack of enthusiasm in regard to entertainments of so superior a class. His lordship, as he relates, had striven to revive the *De Monfort* of Miss Joanne Baillie, to produce the *Ivan* of Mr. Sotheby, and "to wake Mr. Coleridge to write a tragedy;" but all in vain; and incidentally he makes the curious confession that the famous *School for Scandal* of Sheridan had been the play which had brought the *least money* to the treasury of the theatre, "averaging the number of times it has been acted since its production." Still the "legitimate drama" did not derive its character of legitimacy simply from its regard for critical canons and prescriptions, its

compliance with the classic rules of dramatic composition; it was the drama by law established and protected in this country; it could only lawfully be presented upon certain specially privileged stages. It was the drama of the monopolists and the patentees; for its sake all other dramas were held to be spurious, contraband, illegitimate.

London appears to have been content for many years with the two playhouses which Charles II. provided for its recreation when he bestowed patents upon his friends Davenant and Killigrew; yet before the Civil War some half-dozen theatres had flourished in town. As Prynne stated the case in 1633: "The multitude of our London play-haunters being so augmented now, that all the ancient Devil's chapels, for so the Fathers' style all playhouses, being five in number, are not sufficient to contain their troupes, whence we see a sixth added to them." In 1703, regardless of the law, there was a theatre open in Goodman's Fields; and the year 1720 saw the opening of the Little Theatre on the site of the King's Head Tavern in the Haymarket. Meanwhile, in the grounds of sundry of the suburban tea-gardens, small theatres had been erected, wherein it was usual to present certain insignificant entertainments of the stage which did not trench, it was assumed, upon the privileged performances of the patent houses. At Sadler's Wells, for in-

stance, as early as 1695, there had been built upon the lawn a long room, partly arranged as a theatre; the stage, a temporary platform of planks keyed together, being placed at one end, and having a bench on each side for the orchestra. The "divertissements" consisted of a concert, with morris and other dancing and singing. Cheesecakes, custards, bottled ale and cider, and other refreshments were purchased at the bar by the visitors, who were then permitted to walk into the theatre, where the fumes of tobacco were mingled with the musical and stage performances. Some few years later to this "Musick House," as it was called, a gallery was added, with an organ-loft, for the accommodation of the more genteel visitors. The amusements were as yet of a simple sort: a lady played the organ; a fiddler, attired in scarlet, accomplished a solo; a little girl of eleven danced a sword-dance; a youth danced a jig, and diverted the spectators by making monkey-like grimaces; the performances concluding with a hornpipe by a functionary known generally as "honest friend Thomas," who officiated in the two-fold character of clown and waiter. In George I.'s time the attractions of rope-dancing, tumbling, vaulting, and pantomime were added to the entertainments, which, as the patrons of the Musick House were poetically informed, they could witness upon easy terms:

"You only pay for liquors, not the show,—
Such as neat brandy, southern cyder fine,
And grape's true juice as e'er was pressed from vine."

About the middle of the last century one Rosamon, whose name still exists attached to a street in Clerkenwell, added "burlettas" to the previous performances in the Musick House, and increased the number of visitors by instituting a convivial society known as the Sadler's Wells Club, the members of which, counting Goldsmith among their number, were admitted *free* to the theatre. At this time every purchaser of a pint of wine at the Wells was likewise allowed to see the performances without further charge.

Some years later, a small theatre, for the performance of "burlettas," was erected in the pleasure-grounds known as Marylebone Gardens. Beaumont-street, and parts of Devonshire-place and Devonshire-street, Marylebone, now occupy the site of Marylebone Gardens, or "Marrowbone Gardens," as Mr. Pepys preferred to say, recording his first visit there in 1668; "and a pretty place it is," he adds. There had long been a noted tavern in Marylebone Gardens, with bowling-greens, much frequented by persons of quality in the last century.

But the place fell into disrepute, and was referred to by Gay as the resort of the highwayman, Captain Macheath, and his friends. When, in 1821, *The Beggar's Opera* was

carefully revived at Drury Lane, for the sake of Madame Vestris's performance of the Captain, an additional scene was exhibited, representing Marylebone Gardens as they appeared in Gay's time. Before 1737, the gardens had been opened to all comers free of charge. An attempt was then made to improve the character of the entertainments. A shilling was charged for entrance-fee, an equivalent in the form of refreshments being furnished. Public breakfasts were given, and evening concerts. The best singers were engaged; brilliant fireworks were displayed. In gravelled walks and supper-boxes, statues, lamps, lights, music, and decorations, Marylebone Gardens rivalled Vauxhall.

The musical arrangements of the gardens were, in 1769, under the direction of the popular composer, Dr. Arnold, who was, indeed, a partner in the enterprise, and thereby suffered ultimately a loss of some ten thousand pounds. Among the "burlettas" presented in the little theatre in the grounds, and duly conducted by Dr. Arnold, was *The Portrait*, an English edition, by Mr. George Colman, the manager of Covent Garden Theatre, of the little French comedy, *Le Tableau Parlant*, and produced upon his stage in November 1770. The little play seemed imitative of Italian pantomime. A large picture of Pantaloon occupies the centre of the stage. Pantaloon wishes to marry his ward

Isabella; but the young lady has bestowed her affections upon Leander, the harlequin of the drama, who has for his servant Pierrot the clown. Pantaloon pretends that he must be absent for some days. He returns secretly, however, and is enraged to find a table spread with a supper for the regalement of Leander. Pantaloon cuts out the face of the portrait, and substitutes his own countenance—just as Peg Woffington has so often done in the modern comedy of *Mask and Faces*. Through the aperture he has made, Pantaloon watches the lovers. After supper, in a spirit of mockery, they go through the form of kneeling to the picture, and imploring Pantaloon's consent to their union. They then argue that the silence of the portrait signifies consent, when Pantaloon, from the opening in the canvas, exclaims, "It's a lie!" and then disclosing himself, comes forward. Eventually, having sufficiently alarmed and humbled the lovers, he resigns Isabella to Leander. The music of *The Portrait* had been supplied by Dr. Arnold. Upon the doctor's application, George Colman permitted the performance of *The Portrait* in the little "burletta" theatre of Marylebone Gardens.

It was agreed that the representation of "burlettas" did not infringe the privileges of the patent theatres; but it was less clear what the term "burletta" really signified and comprehended. "Much of the perplexity,

though not all," wrote George Colman the younger, "has been created by the term itself being a *coinage*, evidently from the Italian; and we have therefore no decided definition of it, from any authority." The word was not included in Johnson's *Dictionary*; but he gave *burlesque*, deriving it from the Italian *burlare*, to jest, and defining it as "jocular, tending to raise laughter by unnatural or unsuitable language or images." Nor was *burletta* to be found in Baretti's *Italian and English Dictionary*, long the best standard work of its class. Baretti, however, gave "*burla*, a jest and banter; *burlare*, to laugh at, to banter; *burlatore*, a banterer; *burlesco*, *burlevole*, facetious, merry, comical;" and a few words the "near relations of these." In more modern Italian dictionaries the word *burletta* finds a place, however, but with the vague definition of *comédie*, *opera buffa*, &c. Mr. Colman proceeds: "Now the diminutive *operetta*, also a coinage, being derived from *opera burletta* seems as naturally derived from *burla*, the nearest root for it among the words above quoted; and if so, a little jest or banter or burlesque; that is, as a drama, a short comical piece. Still this only half settles the point; for whether *burlesque*, *jocular*, &c., be in dramatic acceptation all singing or all speaking, or either or neither, or a mixture of both, deponent Johnson sayeth not: nor is deponent Baretti more explicit as to the word '*burla*,' a jest, or banter."

The little play of *The Portrait*, we are informed, was received upon its first production for what it purported or professed to be—"a burletta." No question was raised concerning it, although that "there was no doubt then," as Colman says, "as to what it was," may be less certain. For his part, with his "rooted notions of an old theatrical stager," he found it difficult to consider a "burletta" otherwise than as an entirely musical drama in rhyme; "a short comic piece, consisting of recitatives and singing, wholly accompanied, more or less, by the orchestra." He found it difficult, however, even after searching the pages of the *Biographia Dramatica*—the best list of English dramatic entertainments from the earliest times to the date of its publication—to enumerate many productions that completely correspond with his description of a burletta. He names four only as the most conspicuous works of the class: *Midas* and *The Golden Pippin*, by Keene O'Hara; *Poor Vulcan*, by Dibdin; and *The Portrait*. All these, he says, "came under his description of rhyme, recitative, and vocal and instrumental music, with nothing spoken."

It is clear that, from Colman's point of view, the repertory at the service of the burletta theatres was very limited; yet in the first instance the managers of those establishments accepted this confined interpretation of the word "burletta," and sought to shape

their entertainments accordingly; with a natural desire, however, to stretch their bonds as far as they would go, and make the most of their small liberties. They were charged, indeed, with gradually transforming the burletta into "a different kind of drama from what it was when first performed in this country," and thereby exceeding the limits of their general licence. They made their verses sound as much like prose as possible, the actors running one line into another, and slurring over the rhymes. The recitatives became plain speech, a harpsichord being touched now and then by way of accompaniment to the speaker: "sometimes once in a minute, then once in five minutes, then not at all;" at last even the musical and rhyming dialogue was abandoned, and the burletta was not to be differentiated from the other forms of theatrical entertainment; there was no distinguishing the illegitimate from the legitimate drama.

The burletta theatres, however, could presently claim that they had been furnished by the managers of one of the patent houses with a valuable precedent and a strong argument in favour of latitude in determining the nature of a burletta. At Covent Garden Theatre, in 1780, Fielding's burlesque tragedy of *Tom Thumb* was revived, with alterations and "with the addition of songs," the play-bills inadvertently describing the work as "a

burletta." Now *Tom Thumb* contained much spoken dialogue without musical accompaniment; it was not originally a musical piece in any respect. If, upon the Covent Garden manager's own showing, *Tom Thumb* was a burletta, why, then, many other plays might without reasonable objection be revived and announced as burlettas. The term must be liberally construed. The jealousy of the patentees, however, was much excited by the pretensions and proceedings of the burletta houses. Legal advice was sought, and action was taken in the matter. The proprietors of Sadler's Wells, of Astley's Amphitheatre, of the Royalty Theatre in Wellclose-square, of the Royal Circus or Surrey Theatre, were in turn threatened with the penalties of the law. In the case of Sadler's Wells, endeavour was made to secure the immunity of the managers by means of a special Act of Parliament. The antiquity of the establishment was urged as a reason for exempting it from punishment, and even for legalising its performances. But Lord Chancellor Thurlow, looking over the Bill introduced by the managers, demanded, "Is it because they are the oldest offenders that they claim to go unpunished? No; all or none." And the Bill was thrown out. The Royalty and Surrey Theatres were compelled for some time to close their doors, while poor Philip Astley was sent to prison; presently to be released, however, upon the interposition

of the same Lord Chancellor, whose daughters had, it seemed, received riding-lessons from the famous equestrian performer, and regarded him indulgently.

The occasional confinement of an actor as a rogue and vagabond, however, could not really help much to the settlement of the burletta difficulty. George Colman writes that "the clashing interests of the Greats and Smalls under the jurisdiction of the Lord Chamberlain occasioned the affair to be canvassed before the Privy Council, who called in the Crown lawyers upon the subject; and the lawyers, after investigating the question of 'What is a burletta?' solved it much after the manner of the respondents to Scrub in *The Beaux' Stratagem*. Their answer was, that they could not tell, and they replied that they knew nothing of the matter. Thus a point once thought easy was plunged into difficulty; and thus do people grow wiser and wiser every day till at last they acquire the sapience of that ancient philosopher who was candid enough to say, 'All I know is, that I know nothing.'" Much doubt and difficulty prevailed. Sir Vicary Gibbs was said to have judged that even *operas* might be safely represented under a licence of the local magistracy, and without reference to the Lord Chamberlain; and the operas of that time were largely composed of dialogue unaccompanied by music. As licenser of plays the

Lord Chamberlain was troubled how to proceed. He was unable himself to define what productions were, or were not, burlettas. He could not withhold his licence from the so-called burlettas that were submitted to him, provided they were in other respects unobjectionable. He declined the task of bringing the minor theatres into a court of justice when the result to be gained seemed so uncertain. Burlettas had long been allowed to the minor theatres, and as he could obtain no proof or professional opinion that the works in question were not burlettas, he felt that he must accept that description of them. He was not inclined to litigation, nor did his office supply the machinery for bringing offenders to justice. The Duke of Montrose, however, who was Lord Chamberlain in 1828, modified the form of proceeding, and granted a qualified licence to the piece submitted to him "called by the manager a burletta," and "provided it be in legal acceptance a burletta." It was left to the patentees to take remedial measures if they conceived that the law had been infringed to their detriment, or that their special privileges had been in any way interfered with. The opponent managers were left to fight their quarrels out in the proper arena, a court of law. If the patentees declined the encounter because of its costliness, it might be assumed that the injuries they complained of were not really very serious. In one respect

the major theatres were assisted by a legal decision. Actors who had been committed to the King's Bench prison could not so far avail themselves of its "Rules" as to exhibit their talents upon the stages of Lambeth. Judge Kenyon was induced to abridge the privileges which the prisoners had at one time enjoyed; he excluded all public-houses and places of public amusement from "the liberty of the Rules." Lord Chancellor Thurlow is also said to have restricted the pleasures of the prisoners in like manner. A party of "Rulers," on their way to Epsom races, had invaded and injured his lordship's plantations and pleasure-grounds.

The minor theatres or burletta houses were not intimidated by the occasional raids and sallies of the patentees, but continued more and more to encroach upon their privileges. Elliston, who, after the burning of Drury Lane in 1809, had become lessee of the Surrey Theatre, ventured upon the most glaring evasion and even defiance of the law. He produced, as a "burletta melodrama," *The Beggar's Opera*, and presented the tragedy of *Macbeth*, describing it as "a grand ballet of action with music." The jingle of rhyme was here and there added to Shakespeare's lines, and now and then was to be heard the half-stifled squeak of a violin, by way of musical accompaniment, to maintain the traditions of burletta, and give some pretence of legality to

the entertainment. In the guise of burlettas other of Shakespeare's plays in time found their way to the Lambeth stage. *King John* appeared as *Magna Charta*, and *Julius Cæsar* as *The Murder of Cæsar, or the Battle of Philippi*, while Southerne's tragedy of *Oroonoco* took the form of *The African, or the Cruelties of the Slave Trade*. In 1806 the Sans Pareil Theatre, afterwards known as the Adelphi, opened in the Strand with a variety of mechanical and optical entertainments, songs, recitations, &c., in the first instance, but presently with performances of a decidedly dramatic sort. Through a trap-door in the stage a pianoforte rose at intervals, by way of reminding the audience that the amusements had some connection with music. Miss Scott, the daughter of the proprietor, who was commonly known as "True Blue" Scott because of a liquid dye he had invented or patented, provided the theatre with innumerable plays, and usually appeared upon the stage as the heroine of her own works. *Ultharsu the Sorceress*, *The Red Robber*, *The Ugly Woman of Bagdad*, *Asgard the Demon Hunter*, *Mary the Maid of the Inn*, *The Old Oak Chest*, *Rakishnah the Outcast*, *The Forest Knight*—these are the titles of certain of Miss Scott's illegitimate dramas. Every night three plays were usually presented, with the addition of comic and sentimental singing and dancing, recitations, imitations of famous performers,

and tight-rope exercises. In 1813 the Olympic Theatre was opened with performances of a superior character; it had been previously known as the Olympic Pavilion, and devoted to the equestrian exhibitions of Philip Astley. An attempt to bestow upon the house the title of "Little Drury Lane" was prevented by the Lord Chamberlain, who for a term, indeed, closed the doors of the theatre altogether. In 1818 the proprietors of Drury Lane and Covent Garden combined, in a memorial to the Marquis of Hertford, the Lord Chamberlain of the time, "against the infringement and abuse of their licences by the proprietors of the Olympic and Sans Pareil Theatres." The patentees expressed their great alarm at the prospect of the destruction of their privileges, "upon the faith of which a million of money had been of late years embarked in their two theatres." Their patent rights, "solemnly recognised by the highest authorities in the realm," were shaken to the foundation by the licensing of the Olympic and Sans Pareil. Besides these houses, "licences of every description, to every person and to every place," had been freely granted at the Lord Chamberlain's office, and these licences had been daringly infringed. It was urged that when his lordship had granted Mr. Astley a licence for the Olympic, to keep his horses from the time of the closing to the opening of his Amphitheatre, it was not

contemplated that under that licence such a tragedy as *Fazio* would be performed upon his stage; nor that the licence to Mr. Scott, for his daughter, Miss Scott, to appear in burlettas at the Sans Pareil, would empower him to engage a regular company of comedians to represent whatever pieces they might choose: "for thus," said the memorialists, "the term burletta is now construed at these theatres, although it could easily be proved that burletta is distinguished from tragedy, comedy, opera, farce, &c., by its being a piece in verse, accompanied by music;" while the pieces presented at the Olympic and Sans Pareil were neither more nor less than pieces of the regular drama. Further, it was stated that at the doors of these two theatres a sum, upon an average exceeding 150*l.*, was nightly taken; and there being in this or any other city but a certain proportion of money to be expended upon theatrical amusements, the two patent theatres were thus deprived nightly to the extent of 150*l.* "of their chance of profit, and the means of supporting the dignity of the national drama." Elliston, as proprietor of the Olympic Theatre, addressed a letter to the Chamberlain in order to counteract the effect of the memorial. Elliston was argumentative, and, as usual, grandiloquent. He wrote: "As regards the question of property —to me and my large family a most important question—I am so far from entertaining the

slightest fear of the result of such an attack, that I defy, in the most determined manner, the utmost efforts that malignity, self-interest, a thirst for monopoly, or any other still less amiable motive may engender, for the extinction, by legal means, of the valid title which, I am certain, I hold under the sanction and authority of the licence granted by your lordship." In conclusion, Elliston urged that the small dealer was as well entitled to assistance and favour as the wholesale speculator, and entreated the Chamberlain not to consign to destruction the Olympic, in which the manager had embarked a very considerable portion of his property, nor to suppress his trade for the sake of augmenting the profits of the proprietors of Drury Lane and Covent Garden, who had ventured to abuse his lordship's time and patience "by such monstrous incongruities, by such puerile frivolities, and by such gross, and, to use their own selection of epithets, by such 'daring' and 'scandalous' misrepresentations."

It was doubtless to the audacity and enterprise of Elliston that the minor theatres owe, in great part, their ultimate emancipation from the arbitrary restraints under which they had so long suffered, the difficulty of defining the word "burletta" also helping them to obtain their liberties. But the contest between the major and the minor houses was prolonged during many years. At intervals

the Lord Chamberlain licensed a "burletta" theatre, but still forbore to interpret the word, or to explain exactly the kind of entertainment that could be presented under a burletta licence. Meantime the so-called legitimate drama seemed to please less than the illegitimate. In 1843 Macready attended at the Home Office, and urged that the right of acting Shakespeare should be given to all licensed theatres, if the patent theatres were unable to act his works. And further, the actor having himself been a patentee, informed the House of Commons in a petition that "all kinds of degrading exhibitions, tending, not to humanise and refine, but to brutalise and corrupt the public mind, had been introduced upon the patent stage. Certainly nothing worse could have been said of the burletta houses and the illegitimate drama.

Yet what a struggle there had been some years before to invest with some sort of legality the performances at the little Strand Theatre! The house had first opened for dramatic entertainments in 1832, but the Lord Chamberlain witheld his licence; thereupon all kinds of expedients were resorted to in evasion of the strict letter of the law. It was declared illegal to take money at the doors. Forthwith the money was taken *at a window*. It was like a revival of the old method obtaining at the Goodman's Fields Theatre, in Garrick's time, when the public

was admitted gratis to witness a dramatic exhibition, and paid to listen to a concert given between the acts. Presently an adjoining sweetmeat-shop was opened in connection with the Strand Theatre, and visitors paid four shillings an ounce for rose lozenges, and had an admission to the Strand boxes given them, or purchased half an ounce of peppermint drops for two shillings, and received a gratuitous check for the pit thrown into the bargain. The playbills, meanwhile, were headed with the words "Admission Gratis." Presently an arrangement was made with Mr. Glossop, the lessee of the Victoria Theatre, an establishment open under a magistrate's licence, and at that time beyond the range of the Chamberlain's jurisdiction. A box-office for the Victoria Theatre was opened next door to the Strand Theatre. Every purchaser there of a ticket for the Victoria Theatre was presented *gratis* with a corresponding ticket of admission to the Strand Theatre. In 1835, however, at the instance of the patentees, proceedings were taken against the manager, and the theatre was closed; the actors were summoned to Bow-Street and fined by the sitting magistrate; and, "by order of the Lord Chamberlain," eighty-six families were said to have been "suddenly thrown out of a comfortable subsistence." This arbitrary act roused much public indignation. The patentees were abashed;

the Chamberlain gave way. In 1836 the Strand was opened as a licensed burletta house. In the previous year a burletta licence had been accorded to the St. James's Theatre.

With the passing of the Act of 1843 came the extension of the Chamberlain's rule to the whole metropolis on both sides of the Thames, and, practically, the abolition of the special privileges enjoyed by the patentees. Free-trade in theatrical entertainments was instituted; the illegitimate drama was legitimated, or it may be said that the legitimate drama was deprived of any peculiar claims arising from its legitimacy; the word "burletta" fell back into obscurity, became useless and obsolete. Even the early plays founded upon the novels of Charles Dickens—*Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, &c.—had been first produced as 'burlettas.' But now all was changed. Burlesques were forthcoming in plenty; but of burlettas nothing more was heard. All need of finding an adequate and correct interpretation of the word had ceased; for, indeed, the word itself had vanished. Certainly it had in its time done the State some service; at any rate it had made considerable stir in the theatrical world.

CHAPTER VIII.

STRANGE PLAYERS.

No doubt the actor's art depends considerably upon his physical gifts and qualifications. It is not enough for him to sympathise sincerely with the character he undertakes, to feel deeply its emotions, to weep or to laugh with it, as the case may require; he must be prepared also to represent or to personate it; he must so express it as to render it credible, intelligible, and affecting to others. Aspect, elocution, attitude and gesture, these are the means wherewith he accomplishes his effects, illudes his audience, and wins of them their applause: these are his professional implements and symbols, and without these there can be no acting. "A harsh inflexible voice, a rigid or heavy face," Mr. G. H. Lewes has said, "would prevent even a Shakespeare from being impressive and affecting on the stage;" and the same critic has decided that unless the actor possesses the personal and physical qualifications requisite for the representation of the character he undertakes,

no amount of ability in conceiving it will avail.

But, of course, stage portraiture can only be a matter of approximation: the actor has to seem rather than to be the character he performs, although it is likely that the actors themselves do not so clearly perceive this distinction. Macready enters in his diary at one place: "Began to read over Macbeth. Like Maclise over his pictures, I exclaim, 'Why cannot I make it the very thing, the reality?'" At another time he writes: "Acted Macbeth as badly as I acted it well on Monday last. The gallery was noisy, but that is no excuse for me. I could not feel myself in the part. I was labouring to play Macbeth. On Monday last I *was* Macbeth." And again a little later: "Acted Macbeth in my best manner, positively improving several passages, but sustaining the character in a most satisfactory manner. J'ai été le personnage." The admired comedian Molé had a sounder view of his professional duties when he observed of one of his own performances: "Je ne suis pas content de moi, ce soir. Je me suis trop livré, je ne suis pas resté mon maître; j'étais entré trop vivement dans la situation; j'étais le personnage même, je n'étais plus l'acteur qui le joue. J'ai été vrai, comme je le serais chez moi; pour l'optique du théâtre il faut l'être autrement."

This *optique du théâtre*, in fact, with cer-

tain artifices of the toilet skilfully employed, so materially abets the player in his efforts to portray, disguising his imperfections and making amends for his shortcomings, that it becomes a question at last as to what natural advantages he can or cannot dispense with. Is there anything, he may be tempted to ask, that positively unfits him for creditable appearance upon the scene? The stage is a wide field, an open profession, finds occupation for very many; what matters it if some of its servants present sundry physical defects and infirmities? Can absolutely nothing be done with the harsh inflexible voice? Is the rigid heavy face so fatal a bar to histrionic success? It is desirable, of course, that Romeo should be young, and Juliet beautiful; that Ferdinand should be better-looking than Caliban, and Hamlet less corpulent than Falstaff; that Lear should appear venerable, and Cæsar own a Roman nose; but even as to these obvious conditions the play-going public is usually prepared to allow some discount or abatement. No doubt, too great a strain may be placed upon public lenity in this respect. There is an old story told of the seeking of a theatrical engagement by a very unlikely candidate. It was objected that he was very short.—So, he said, was Garrick. It was charged against him that he was very ugly.—Well, Weston had been very ugly. But he squinted

abominably.—So did the admirable comedian, Lewis. But he stuttered.—Mrs. Inchbald had stuttered, nevertheless her success upon the stage had been complete. But he was lame of one leg.—Mr. Foote had been very lame; in fact, had lost one of his legs. But his voice was weak and hollow.—So, he alleged, was Mr. Kemble's. But, it was finally urged against him, he had all these defects combined.—So much the more singular, he pleaded. However, the manager decided not to engage him.

Some years since a book was published entitled, 'The Lost Senses,' which set forth how, notwithstanding grievous afflictions and physical infirmities, the writer had contrived to lead a studious, useful, and not unhappy life. How many of his faculties can an actor afford to lose? There have been mad players. The case of the Irish actor Layfield, narrated by O'Keeffe, is perhaps hardly in point. Layfield was struck with incurable madness while in the act of playing Iago to the Othello of Sheridan, and died shortly afterwards in an asylum. The first symptom of his malady is said to have been the perversion of the text of his part and his description of Jealousy as a "green-eyed lobster." And the later eccentricities of the veteran Macklin may be attributed rather to excessive senility than to absolute mental disease. We are told that, properly attired as Shylock, he entered the greenroom, where the other

players were already assembled. He was about to make his last appearance upon the stage. "What! is there a play to-night? he enquired. All were amazed; no one answered. "Is there a play to-night?" he repeated. The representative of Portia said to him, "Yes, of course. 'The Merchant of Venice.' What is the matter with you, Mr. Macklin?" "And who is the Shylock?" he asked. "Why, you, sir, you are the Shylock." "Ah," he said, "am I?" and he sat down in silence. There was general concern. However, the curtain went up, the play began, and the aged actor performed his part to the satisfaction of the audience, if he stopped now and then and moved to the side the better to hear the prompter. "Eh, what is it? what do you say?" he sometimes demanded audibly, as he lifted up his hair from his ear and lowered his head beside the prompter's box.

But Reddish, the stepfather of George Canning, was decidedly a mad player. He had been dismissed from Covent Garden Theatre because of his "indisposition of mind," when, upon the intervention of certain of his friends, the management granted him a benefit. The play of 'Cymbeline' was accordingly announced with Reddish as Posthumus. Ireland in his biography of Henderson relates that an hour before the performance he met Reddish "with the step

of an idiot, his eye wandering, and his whole countenance vacant." Congratulated upon his being sufficiently recovered to appear, "Yes, sir," he said, "I shall perform, and in the garden scene I shall astonish you!" "The garden scene?" cried Ireland! "I thought you were to play Posthumus." "No, sir, I play Romeo." And all the way to the theatre he persisted that he was to appear as Romeo: he even recited various of the speeches of that character, and after his arrival in the greenroom it was with extreme difficulty he could be persuaded that he had to play any other part. When the time came for him to appear upon the stage, he was pushed on, everyone fearing that he would begin his performance of Posthumus with one of Romeo's speeches. "With this expectation," writes Ireland, "I stood in the pit, close to the orchestra, and being so near had a perfect view of his face. The instant he came in sight of the audience his recollection seemed to return, his countenance resumed meaning, his eye appeared lighted up, he made the bow of modest respect, and went through the scene much better than I had before seen him. On his return to the greenroom, the image of Romeo returned to his mind, nor did he lose it till his second appearance, when, the moment he had the cue, he went through the scene; and in this weak and imbecile state of his understanding per-

formed the whole better than I ever saw him before." Ireland even pronounced that the actor's manner in his insane state was "less assuming and more natural," than when he had "the full exercise of his reason." Reddish was not seen again upon the stage, however; he died soon afterwards hopelessly mad, an inmate of York Asylum.

In the records of the Théâtre Français a very similar case may be found. The actor Monrose, famous at one time for his admirable personation of the character of Figaro, had been for some months in confinement because of the disordered condition of his mind. His success in Beaumarchais' comedy had in truth turned his brain. He had so identified himself with the part of the Spanish barber that he could not lay it down or be rid of it. On the stage or off, sleeping or waking, he was always Figaro. He had forgotten his own name, but he answered to that of Figaro. In conversation he was absent, appeared not to hear or not to understand what was said to him; but a quotation from the 'Barbier' produced an immediate reply, a merry laugh, a droll gesture. It was resolved that a performance should be given for his benefit, and that he should appear as Figaro upon the occasion. The house was crowded to excess. Mdlle. Rachel and all the leading players of the Français lent their services. The representation produced a profit of

18,000 francs. Dr. Blanche, the leading physician of the asylum in which the actor had been confined, was present throughout the evening, in close attendance upon his patient, soothing and encouraging him in the intervals of the performance. The anxiety both of spectators and actors was very great. The scene was described as "exciting in the highest degree." It was dreaded lest the actor's malady should suddenly disclose itself. The audience hesitated to applaud lest they should dangerously excite the poor man. Mdlle. Rachel was so affected that she twice lost recollection of the words she should speak, although she was appearing in one of her most favourite and familiar characters. The representatives of Rosina and Almaviva could not disguise their terror; at each word, at each gesture, of Figaro's they looked for betrayal of his insanity. It was said, however, that the actor had never played better than on this his last night upon the stage when he was released but for a few hours from the madhouse. He sought to re-assure his friends by his ease of manner, his smiling glances, his air of complete self-possession. At one time only did he seem thoroughly conscious of the painful position in which he was placed. Towards the close of the third act of the comedy Figaro is required to exclaim three times, "Il est fou!" We are told that at this utterance "every heart beat

with terror . . . and here, and here only, did Monrose himself seem to betray that he was aware of the truth; he spoke with increasing vehemence and with an expression of the most poignant grief."

In the Memoirs of Mrs. Bellamy of Covent Garden Theatre it is told how an insane actress once forced her way on to the stage and represented to perfection the madness of Ophelia; but the story is not very credible. Mrs. Verbruggen—she had been known, too, as Mrs. Mountford, and in her honour Gay, it was said, had written his 'Black-eyed Susan'—had been confined for some time in an asylum; her mind had suffered because of the perfidy of Mr. Barton Booth the tragedian, who had suddenly transferred his affections from her to the beautiful Miss Santlow the dancer. Mrs. Verbruggen was allowed considerable liberty, however, for her malady had not assumed a violent form, so that she was able with little difficulty to elude the watchfulness of her attendants and make her way to the theatre. She had ascertained that 'Hamlet' was to be represented; as Ophelia she had been wont to receive the most fervent applause. "Concealing herself till the scene in which Ophelia makes her appearance in her insane state, she pushed on to the stage before her who played the character that night, and exhibited a far more perfect representation of madness than the utmost exertions

of mimic art could do. She was in truth Ophelia's self, to the amazement of the performers as well as of the audience. Nature having made this last effort, her vital powers failed her."

There have been blind players. In the 'Wolverhampton Chronicle,' December 1792, appeared a statement to the effect that one Briscoe, the manager of a small theatrical company then in Staffordshire, although stone-blind, represented all the heroes in his tragedies and the lovers in genteel comedies. In 1744, on April 2, the Drury Lane playbill was headed with a quotation from Milton: "The day returns, but not to me returns." The performances were given for the benefit of Dr. Clancy, author of the tragedies, 'Tamar Prince of Nubia,' and 'Hermon, Prince of Choræa,' who had become blind. The public was duly advertised that "Dr. Clancy being deprived of the advantages of following his profession, the master of the playhouse had kindly favoured him with a benefit night; it was therefore hoped that, as that was the first instance of any person labouring under so heavy a deprivation performing on the stage, the novelty as well as the unhappiness of his case would engage the favour and protection of a British audience." The tragedy of 'Œdipus' was represented, and the blind man personated the blind prophet Teresias. The performance produced some profit, and

Dr. Clancy was further assisted by a pension of 40*l.* per annum out of the privy purse. Imperfect sight has been no bar to success upon the stage. Even Roscius is said to have been afflicted with obliquity of vision, and therefore to have played in a vizard, until his audience, recognising his great histrionic merits, induced him to discard his mask that they might the better enjoy his exquisite oratory and the music of his voice. The great Talma squinted. And a dramatic critic writing in 1825 noted it as a strange fact that "our three light comedians, Elliston, Jones, and Browne," each suffered from "what is called a cast in the eye." Mr. Bernard in his 'Retrospections' describes a provincial actor of some reputation who, although possessed of but one eye, played, "all the lovers and harlequins." With shortness of sight many of our players have been troubled, or how can we account for such well-known facts, for instance, as the eye-glass of Mr. Bancroft and the *pince-nez* of Mr. Irving? Poor Mrs. Dancer—she was afterwards famous as Mrs. Spranger Barry and as Mrs. Crawford—was so short-sighted that Hugh Kelly, in his satirical poem of 'Thespis,' rudely spoke of her as a "moon-eyed idiot." And once when by accident she dropped her dagger as she was about to commit self-slaughter upon the stage in the old tragic way—she was playing Calista in the 'Fair Penitent'—her imperfect

vision hindered her from perceiving where her weapon had fallen, and she could not recover it. "The attendant endeavoured to push it towards her with her foot; this failing, she was obliged to pick it up, and very civilly handed it to her mistress to put an end to herself with: an awkward effect, as it took from the probability of the scene," simply comments O'Keeffe who relates the story. The late Herr Staudigl, who usually wore spectacles when he was not engaged upon the stage, found his weakness of sight a special disadvantage when he personated Bertram in 'Robert le Diable.' He could not find the trap-door through which Bertram should descend in the final scene of the opera, although pains had been taken to mark broadly with chalk the exact position of the opening. The famous bass was usually conducted carefully to the spot and held over it that he might not miss it by the Robert and Alice of the night. From the first, indeed, the trapdoor in 'Robert' had been a source of inconvenience. On the night of the production of the opera, Nourrit, who played Robert, an impassioned artist, "entraîné par la situation, se précipita étourdiment dans la trappe à la suite du dieu des enfers." The audience, much alarmed, exclaimed, "Nourrit est tué!" Mdlle. Dorus, the representative of Alice, shed tears. No harm had been done, however. Robert was not hurt. He had fallen upon the mattresses

arranged for Bertram. "Que diable faites-vous ici?" said Bertram's interpreter Levasseur to Nourrit as they met beneath the stage. "Est-ce qu'on a changé le dénouement?"

The late John Baldwin Buckstone was extremely deaf; his infirmity scarcely affected his performance, however, if, as Mr. Tom Taylor wrote, it "raised a wall of separation between him and all but a small circle of intimates." His quickness of intelligence in matters of his craft was so great that he might have been closely watched not only on the stage at night but even at the morning's rehearsal without discovery being made that he could hear no word of what was passing about him. "He was guided, in his by-play as well as in his spoken part, entirely by his knowledge of the piece acquired in reading it, and by his quick eye, which could catch much of what his stage-interlocutors said from the movement of their lips and the expression of their faces. I remember his telling me," Mr. Taylor notes, "that it was only by this means he knew when his cue to speak came." An earlier actor, one Winstone, attached to the Bristol Theatre, remained upon the stage as an octogenarian although he was so affected with deafness that he could not possibly "catch the word" from the prompter. Delivering his farewell address, he secured the assistance of one of the performers to stand close behind him, advancing as he advanced and retiring

as he retired, like a shadow, and charged to prompt him should he fail in the words of his speech.

Foote presents the most remarkable instance of a one-legged player. While on a visit at Lord Mexborough's, riding a too spirited horse, he was thrown, and received so severe a hurt that his left leg had to be amputated. It was suggested at the time, "as a marvellous proof of the efficacy of avarice," that Foote had unnecessarily undergone amputation that he might surely enlist the sympathies of the Duke of York and by his influence obtain the Chamberlain's licence for the little "theatre in the Haymarket;" but such a supposition is wholly incredible. Foote jested, as his wont was, even under the surgeon's knife. A little while before he had caricatured, in his farce of 'The Orators,' the manner and aspect of Alderman Faulkner, the eccentric Dublin publisher, whose wooden leg had been turned to laughable account upon the stage. "Now I shall be able to take off old Faulkner to the life," said the satirist, when it was announced to him that the operation must be performed. But, in truth, he felt his misfortune acutely; he suffered deeply both in mind and body. He wrote pathetically of his state to Garrick: "I am very weak, in pain, and can procure no sleep but by the aid of opiates. Oh! it is incredible all I have suffered." After an interval he re-appeared upon the stage, how-

ever, the public finding little abatement of his mirthfulness or of his power to entertain. But, as O'Keeffe writes, "with all his high comic humour, one could not help pitying him sometimes as he stood upon one leg leaning against the wall whilst his servant was putting on his stage false leg, with shoe and stocking, and fastening it to the stump; he looked sorrowful, but instantly resuming all his high comic humour and mirth, hobbled forward, entered the scene, and gave the audience what they expected, their plenty of laugh and delight." He wrote his comedy of 'The Lame Lover' as it were to introduce his false leg to the public, and as Sir Luke Limp protested that he was not the worse but much the better for his loss. "Consider," he urged, "I can have neither strain, splint, spavin, nor gout; have no fear of corns, kibes, or that another man should kick my shins or tread on my toes. . . What, d'ye think I would change with Bill Spindle for one of his drum-sticks, or chop with Lord Lumber for both of his logs? What is there I am not able to do? To be sure, I am a little awkward at running; but then, to make me amends, I'll hop with any man in town. . . . A leg! a redundancy! a mere nothing at all. Man is from nature an extravagant creature. In my opinion, we might all be full as well as we are with but half the things that we have!"

Charles Mathews the elder, though he did

not incur the loss of a limb, was thrown from his carriage and lamed for life. When he was enabled to return to the stage, he re-appeared leaning upon a crutch stick and personating a lame harlequin in a comic extravaganza entitled 'Hocus Pocus, or Harlequin Washed White,' designed especially for his re-introduction to the public. Some few years since Signor Donato, a one-legged dancer, appeared in the course of a Covent Garden pantomime, and surprised the audience by the grace and agility he displayed, his mutilated state notwithstanding. He wore the dress of a Spanish bull-fighter, and to the stump of his leg a tassel was affixed, so that it resembled somewhat an old-fashioned sofa cushion. In his 'Retrospections of the Stage' Mr. Bernard describes a veteran manager who, though bent with age and afflicted with gout in all his members, delighted to represent the heroes of light comedy. He was unable to walk or even to stand, and throughout the performance had to remain seated in his easy chair, his lower limb swathed in flannels, and to be wheeled on and off the stage as the circumstances of the play required. He endeavoured to compensate for these drawbacks by taking large pinches of snuff very frequently, and by energetically waving in the air a large and dingy pocket-handkerchief. In this way he would represent such characters as Plume, the vivacious hero of Farquhar's

'Recruiting Officer,' to audiences that were certainly indulgent and tolerant if they were not enthusiastic.

One of Mr. George Vandenhoff's 'Dramatic Reminiscences' relates to a one-armed tragedian he encountered in 1840 on the stage of the Leicester Theatre. The poor man's left arm, it seems, "had been accidentally shot off," nevertheless he appeared as Icilius, as Pizarro, and as Banquo, concealing his deficiency now with his toga, now with his mantle, and now with his plaid. Mr. Vandenhoff writes: "I had really not noticed the poor fellow's mutilation, though I had observed that he seemed rather onesided in his action, till I played Othello to his Iago; and then what was my horror, on seizing him in the third act, to find that I had got hold of an armless sleeve stuffed out in mockery of flesh, for he did not wear a cork arm! I was almost struck dumb, and it was only by a strong effort that I recovered myself sufficiently to go on with the text. Poor fellow! he was a remarkably sensible man and good reader; but of course he could never rise in his profession with only one arm." Art might have helped him, however, as it helped the late M. Roger, the admired French tenor, to a mechanical hand when by the accidental bursting of his gun his own natural right hand was so shattered that immediate amputation above the wrist became absolutely necessary.

By touching certain springs with the left fingers the artificial right hand performed several useful functions, opened and closed, held a pen or paper, grasped and even drew a sword from its sheath. Those uninformed upon the subject might have witnessed the performances of the original John of Leyden in Meyerbeer's 'Prophète,' and never have suspected the loss he had sustained. By a similar accident the English comedian John Bannister injured his left hand, and for some time it was feared that amputation must be undergone. The actor, however, escaped with the loss of two joints from two of his fingers and one joint from the third; this involved his always appearing on the stage afterwards with a gloved hand. In Anthony Pasquin's Life of Edwin the comedian there is an account of a "barn-door actor," boasting the strange name of Gemea, who having lost an eye wore a glass substitute, and was further troubled in that he had been deprived of the use of his left arm, which paralysed and withered hung down uselessly at his side. Nevertheless he contrived to play Richard the Third occasionally, when he endeavoured to keep his lame limb out of the way tucked under his cloak behind him. But as he stalked about and spoke his speeches, the pendant arm shifted its position, came into sight, swung forward and incommoded him greatly, to be "instantly and unkindly slapped back into its

place by the right hand." Throughout the performance, indeed, his right hand was found to be constantly engaged in keeping his left in order; the spectators, meantime, greeting with laughter and applause this curious conduct on the part of the strangest Richard that could ever have been seen upon the stage.

Old age, it need hardly be said, is no disqualification to the player. Curious cases of longevity abound upon the stage. It is almost a condition of the actor's life that he shall be old and seem young. What does the artist's age matter if his art does not grow old? As one of the characters observes in the comedy of 'Confident par Hasard'—"Mon acte de naissance est vieux, mais non pas moi." A youth of twenty was charged with being in love with the septuagenarian actress Déjazet. He denied it, but his blushes seemed to contradict his denial. "Oh!" said Nestor Roqueplan, an elderly gentleman, but a few years the junior of the lady, "il n'y a pas de mal à cela; et vous avez tort de vous en défendre. Quand je l'ai aimée, j'avais votre âge." The famous French actress Mdlle. Mars at sixty was still accepted by the Parisian public as an admirable representative of stage heroines of sixteen. The English actress, Mrs. Cibber, advanced in years, studying through her spectacles the part of Cælia in 'The School for Lovers' declined the proposition made to her that Cælia's age should

be altered and advanced from sixteen to twenty-three. The old actress preferred that Cælia should be as young as possible; and at night the audience confirmed her judgment and held that Mrs. Cibber was no older than the part represented her to be. Mrs. Cibber, however, had preserved a certain youthful grace and slenderness and symmetry of figure; this was not the case with Mdlle. Mars, whose form had become robust and portly—"square-built," to adopt the term employed by Captain Gronow, who, while admiring the actress's "fine black hair and white and even teeth and voice of surpassing sweetness," noted that "the process of dressing her for the stage was a long and painful one, and was said to have been done by degrees, beginning at early dawn, the tightening being gradually intensified until the stage hour, when the finish was accomplished by the maid's foot being placed in the small of the lady's back, and thus the last vigorous haul being given to the refractory staylace." The fat have been usually received with complacency and indulgence by the playgoing public, however. Is not the well-rounded form of Mdlle. Croizette always cordially welcomed on the stage of the Théâtre Français? A German gentleman visiting England some sixty years ago questioned whether there existed in any European theatre "so many untheatrical female figures" as on the London stage. "The managers," wrote

this caviller, "appear to have made it their object to blend together the two extremes of emaciation and corpulence, with a manifest partially, however, to the latter. That class of women who are not improperly termed in Germany 'female dragoons,' seem here considered as the most suitable recruits." And he comments upon the "monstrous absurdity of the performance by Mrs. Jordan, a dame of forty with a portly figure and lusty proportions, of the character of Miss Lucy, a country girl of sixteen who takes delight in playing with her doll in the form of 'The Virgin Unmasked.'" But the Londoners "liberally remunerated her with the most enthusiastic applause." For poor Mdlle. Mars a hint came at last that she was lagging superfluously upon the scene, and that she had outlived the favour and the indulgence of her public. Even while certain of her admirers continued to maintain that "Mdlle. Mars a l'âge qu'elle a besoin d'avoir, parce qu'elle a la force et la grâce de cet âge," a wreath not of live flowers but of *immortelles* such as adorn graveyards was thrown to her upon the stage. The actress withdrew from the scene. The insult may have rather expressed an individual opinion than a general sentiment; but it sufficed. Audiences rarely permit themselves thus to affront their favourites; albeit it is told of a very plain-faced actor that when he played Mithridate, at the line addressed to him by

Monime, "Seigneur, vous changez de visage," the parterre would sometimes cry out, "Laissez-le faire!"

"Mislike me not for my complexion," says the black Prince of Morocco. Is the player ever misliked for his complexion? Like a good horse, a good actor may be of any colour. Lord Byron found at Venice in 1818 an Othello who for some "exquisite reason" declined to assume "the shadowed livery of the burnished sun," and played the part with a white face—but this was in Rossini's opera, not in Shakespeare's tragedy. "They have been crucifying Othello into an opera," wrote Byron, "the music good but lugubrious," &c. Jackson, in his 'History of the Scottish Stage,' mentions an actress reputed to be "not only excellent as to figure and speaking, but remarkably so as to singing," who was wont to appear as Juliet and Polly in 'The Beggar's Opera,' but who had the misfortune to be a negress! Foote proposed that the old Roman fashion should be revived and that the lady should wear a mask, while it was remarked that, in the case of a black Juliet, Romeo's comparison of her beauty to the "rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear" would have a special application. Jackson, passing through Lancashire, had witnessed the lady's performance of Polly. He writes: "I could not help observing to my friend in the pit, when Macheath addressed her with 'Pretty Polly,

say,' that it would have been more germane to the matter had he changed the phrase to 'Sooty Polly, say.'"

Mr. Ira Aldridge, who was pleased to call himself the African Roscius, and who for some years flourished as a tragedian, was a veritable negro born on the west coast of Africa, the son of a native minister of the Gospel. It was intended that the boy should follow his father's calling and become a missionary; for some time he studied theology at an American college and at Glasgow University, obtaining several premiums and a medal for Latin composition. But in the end he adopted the profession of the stage, appearing at the Royalty Theatre in the east of London and at the Coburg, in a round of characters of a dark complexion such as Othello, Zanga, Gambia, Oroonoko, Aboan, and Mungo. He fulfilled various provincial engagements, and at Dublin his exertions were specially commended by Edmund Kean. At Belfast Charles Kean played Iago to Mr. Aldridge's Othello and Aboan to his Oroonoko. He appeared at the Surrey Theatre, at Covent Garden, and the Lyceum. The dramatic critic of the 'Athenæum' in 1858 particularly noticed one merit of his performance of Othello; he dispensed with the black gloves usually worn by Othellos of the theatre and displayed his own black hands, with "his finger-nails expressly apparent." He travelled upon the

Continent, and was received with enthusiasm in the theatres of Germany. Princes and people vied in distinguishing him, crowded houses witnessed his performances, and honours, orders and medals were showered upon him. He extended his repertory of parts, playing Peruvian Rolla, who was no doubt dark-skinned but not of African complexion. By-and-by he exhibited a black Macbeth, a black King Lear. For him was revived the doubtful play of 'Titus Andronicus,' and he personated Aaron the Moor to admiring audiences. On the German stage, strange to say, he was permitted to deliver the English text while his fellow-players were confined to the German version of their speeches. However, the audiences of New York and Boston were similarly tolerant in the case of the German tragedian Herr Bogumil Dawison, who played Othello in German to Mr. Edwin Booth's Iago in English.

Many foreign players have appeared successfully upon the English stage speaking English or broken English. More rarely have English actors ventured to speak from the stage in a language not their own. In the last century, however, Mr. Bellamy, with a company of English amateurs who "spoke French like natives," presented the tragedies of 'Andromaque,' 'Athalie,' and Zaïre' in French at the Richmond Assembly Rooms, expressly

engaged and fitted up for the occasion, some assistance being rendered by the Marquis de Verneuil and Madame Brilliant. Junius Brutus Booth, whose "knowledge and accent of the French tongue" an American critic describes "as simply perfect," played 'Oreste' in French, when 'Andromaque' was produced at the French Theatre, New Orleans, "in a manner to rouse the wildest enthusiasm." Curiously enough, Macready had contemplated the same feat with Rachel for his Andromaque or his Hermione; but he abandoned the notion, satisfied that, although he might succeed in conveying the substance and passion of the scenes, the minor beauties and more subtle meaning belonging to the genius of the language would certainly escape him. It may be added that, within the last few months, certain English performers have amused themselves by joining in a representation in French of Augier's comedy 'L'Aventurière' at the Prince of Wales's Theatre.

We have wandered from our theme a little. But perhaps it has been shown sufficiently that the physical qualifications of the players have been always regarded liberally by the public, and that generally there has prevailed a disposition to accept just what the stage has been prepared to tender, without subjecting it to anything like harsh requisitions or exactions.

CHAPTER IX.

STAGE-DOORS.

In old-fashioned theatres the proscenium, which should constitute a sort of picture-frame to the dramatic exhibition, was adorned on either side of the stage by a door: a "practicable door," as the carpenters of such establishments would call it, for, while looking like a merely decorative object, it was available for the purposes of performance. It was provided with a knocker that could be knocked, a bell that could be rung, a handle that could be turned; and it moved upon hinges, permitting entrance, now before the curtain, and now behind it. A complete description of these "stage-doors" of the past is to be found in the prologue assigned by the authors of Rejected Addresses to the ghost of Dr. Johnson, for supposititious delivery on the opening of Drury-Lane Theatre in 1812—the house, it may be noted having been destroyed by fire and reconstructed without the proscenium-doors, which had so long been regarded as indispensable.

The ghost of Dr. Johnson rises from a trap-door, and, thereupon, the Ghost of Boswell makes a like entrance upon the scene. The second spectre, however, is content to bow respectfully to the audience, obsequiously to his fellow shade, and then to retire without speaking. Johnson's ghost, after some account of the new theatre and the intentions of its managers, proceeds: "Permanent stage-doors we have none. That which is permanent cannot be removed; for if removed, it soon ceases to be permanent. What stationary absurdity can vie with that ligneous barricade which, decorated with frappant and tintinnabulant appendages, now serves as the entrance of the lowly cottage, and now as the exit of a lady's bedchamber: at one time insinuating plastic harlequin into a butcher's shop, and at another yawning as a floodgate, to precipitate the Cyprians of St. Giles's into the embraces of Macbeth. To elude this glaring absurdity, to give to each respective mansion the door which the carpenter would doubtless have given, we vary our portal with the varying scene, passing from deal to mahogany, and from mahogany to oak, as the opposite claims of cottage, palace, or castle may appear to require." As Jeffrey commented, this parody is less happy than certain of the others. Johnson, with all his fondness for sounding epithets and circumlocution, would never have called a door a "ligneous

barricade," nor its knocker and bell "frappant and tintinnabulant appendages;" there is successful mimicry, however, of the solemn air, the formal march and measure of his sentences.

Of such stage-doors as are here described there is no London theatre now in possession. Until a few years since, however, when the interior of the house was remodelled by Mrs. Bateman, Sadler's Wells, the oldest theatre in London had its stage flanked by doors duly fitted and furnished, and altogether of the Old-World pattern. But their use had been much restricted. When the manager, the late Mr. Phelps for instance, desired to address his patrons, or when an admired performer was called before the curtain to receive applause, it was through the proscenium-door that he obtained access to the footlights of Sadler's Wells. But the "ligneous barricade" had long ceased to serve now as the entrance to the lowly cottage, and now as the exit of a lady's bedchamber, &c., and addresses to the audience, it may be observed, had already become far less frequent than was once the case. It was formerly the custom for a performer of the second or third rank, at the close of the first play of the night, to inform the spectators of the arrangements made for the dramatic exhibition of the morrow, for, at this time, the performances were rarely the same upon successive even-

ings; and it was, of course, through one of the proscenium-doors that he advanced to deliver his statement. The nights set apart for the benefit of the actors were announced in the same way. It was considered a very graceful and kindly act on the part of Mrs. Jordan, when she advanced from the stage-door, and informed the house of the night fixed for the benefit of Mrs. Siddons.

A letter, bearing the signature of Charles Easy, and published in the 'Spectator' of December 5th, 1711, draws attention to the strange conduct of "a sort of beau," in the neighbourhood of the proscenium of Drury-lane Theatre, during the representation of the play of Philaster. He is described as ambitious of distinguishing himself, partly by vociferation, and partly by his bodily agility. "Getting into one of the side boxes on the stage, before the curtain drew, he was disposed to show the whole audience his activity by leaping over the spikes. He passed from thence to one of the entering doors, where he took snuff with a tolerably good grace, displayed his fine clothes, made two or three feint passes at the curtain with his cane, then faced about and appeared at the other door. Here he affected to survey the whole house, bowed and smiled at random, and then showed his teeth, which were, some of them, indeed very white. After this he retired behind the curtain, and obliged us with

several views of his person from every opening." He is further stated to have presented himself upon the stage from time to time during the performance. "He appeared frequently in the Prince's apartment, made one at the hunting-match, and was very forward in the rebellion"—these being important scenes in Philaster. It is complained that such proceedings seriously diminish the pleasure of an audience, and are, therefore, presumptuous and unwarrantable, while they are in direct opposition to the royal commands upon the subject; for Queen Anne had issued a special order that no person, of what quality soever, should presume to go behind the scenes or come upon the stage, either before or during the acting of any play, "under penalty of being proceeded against as contemners of our royal authority, and disturbers of the public peace?" It would seem that her Majesty's order did not meet with much regard from the playgoers of quality of the period. The antics described in the 'Spectator,' and accomplished by a gentleman wearing the profuse peruke and the stately costume that Kneller was wont to paint, and Steele and Addison to assume, must certainly have given an air of eccentric vivacity to the stage and stage-doors of Drury-lane Theatre in 1711.

The example set by Drury-lane was followed gradually by the other theatres, with the exception, of course, of Sadler's Wells;

yet, the reform was not adopted with any undue precipitation. It was not until 1831, for instance, that the stage doors at the Olympic Theatre—the Olympic of Madame Vestris's time, not the present edifice, which dates only from 1849—were removed and proscenium-boxes substituted; and loud demand for the alteration had arisen some years before it was carried into effect even at Drury-lane. A critic, writing in 1807, invited public attention to the manifold defects of the British Theatre in the matter of scenic arrangement and decoration. "In England," he wrote, "there is hardly ever a central door contrived in the flat which closes the scene. Whatever be the performance, and whosoever be the personages, they all either walk in and out at the permanent doors, which form part of the proscenium; or they slide in and out between the intervals of the wings, which are generally intended to represent a solid cohering wall; so that, were the laws of perspective sufficiently attended to in the painting of the scenes, and they were made, as they should be made, to look like an uninterrupted mass of masonry, the entrance and exit of each personage through this solid wall would every time appear to be effected by down right witchcraft." By way of contrast, the contrivances of the French theatre are described. Whenever the stage represents a room, it is always made to seem

habitable and inhabited. The scene displays "its own appropriate folding-doors," at which the *dramatis personæ* usually go in and out; and if, from the nature of the story represented, the room should be supposed to lead to "different distinct contiguous apartments," it is provided with as many more additional doors as the occasion demands; each being in one or other of the wings lining the sides of the stage. By these means the illusion of the scene is enhanced, and the plot of the play is rendered more intelligible, "not to speak of the infinitely more striking effect which is produced by a performer of commanding mien, invested with a dignified character, entering the scene in the centre, and, from his very first appearance, presenting himself in front to the spectators, instead of being obliged to slide edgeways on and off the boards through an interstice in the side scenes." Further the critic comments upon the employment of manual labour in England to change the scenes, which on the Continental stages, are shifted by mechanical arts—the mere turning of a wheel sufficing to produce both the retreat of one complete assemblage of wings, and drops, and flats, and the advancement of a new set of lateral, and top, and back canvases, "so that the deepest forest or garden scene is, as if by magic, in a twinkling converted into a street or palace;" whereas, in an English play-house, every change of

scenery is achieved "by dint of hands, and, whether the action lie in Peru or in China, in ancient Greece or in modern London, whenever a scene is to be shifted, out pop a parcel of fellows in ragged laced liveries to announce the event and to bring it about by mere manual labour. They are not only distinctly heard giving each other directions to that purpose, to the unspeakable annoyance of the actor, whom they perhaps outbellow in some of his finest passages, but they are even distinctly seen, tugging and pulling piecemeal at each different portion of the scenery. Of these various divisions some hitch, others tumble; here a wing comes rolling on the stage before its time; then another lags behind until perhaps the time for a new removal arrives; and thus does every one of those changes of decoration, so frequent in English plays, only present a scene of confusion most distressing to the eye."

Our critic also discourses upon the proper method of furnishing the stage when it is supposed to represent a room, noting that in France, upon such occasions, chairs and other appropriate articles of furniture are disposed about the scene, ready for use by the performers as they shall think necessary; but in England, as he charges, whenever a dialogue between "two seated personages" is intended to take place, two footmen in the "ragged

laced liveries" before mentioned—as if endowed with the gift of second sight—at the very opening of the scene "bring two lumbering arm-chairs to the very centre of the in all other respects totally unfurnished boards; there to remain, staring the spectators full in the face, in order to give them timely information of a forthcoming conversation which, perhaps, the author has been torturing his wits to represent as an unpremeditated and spontaneous effusion, resulting from the most unforeseen concurrence of incidents."

The theory that the proscenium was as a frame to the picture constituted by the efforts of the actors was much favoured by Samuel Whitbread, one of the managing committee of Drury Lane after its reconstruction; and it was at his instance that the green curtain was placed in a position unusually remote from the footlights, the performers being forbidden to "mar the illusion" by appearing in advance of the proscenium. Dowton, as the story runs, was the first actor who—like Manfred's ancestor, in the Castle of Otranto—took the liberty of ceasing to be a picture, and of detaching himself from the gilded frame encompassing him. "Don't tell me of frames and pictures!" exclaimed the choleric comedian; "if I can't be heard by the audience in the frame, I'll walk out of it." The proscenium of Drury Lane was subsequently remodelled, and the performers brought nearer to the

spectators, and in all theatres of later construction the space between curtain and footlights has been much reduced. At the old Opera-house, in the Haymarket, there was almost as large a portion of the stage to be seen in front of the proscenium as in the rear of it, so that those of the audience who occupied the boxes in the neighbourhood of the proscenium could see little more than the backs of the vocalists, always careful to approach as near as possible to the footlights, the conductor, and the prompter.

In the theatres of the eighteenth century, two grenadiers stood on guard nightly at the stage-doors. Tate Wilkinson, writing in 1795, refers to the soldier's presence on the boards as a thing of the past: "It was the constant custom, till within the last twenty years, to have guards stand at the frontispiece during the whole performance." They were in attendance originally for the better preservation of the peace, which was often in danger, owing to the violent temper of the playgoers of the period. It was owing to a riot at the Lincoln's-Inn-fields Theatre, in 1721, that a guard of grenadiers, by express command of the king—who avowed himself greatly offended at the outrageous conduct of the audience—first attended the performances at that establishment. The theatre had remained closed for upwards of a week, in consequence of the injury inflicted upon the

fittings and decorations "by a drunken set of young men of quality," who, to avenge what they held to be an insult to one of their number, drew their swords, broke the sconces and lamps, and slashed the hangings, which were of gilded leather finely painted. A noble earl, "who was said—and with some degree of certainty, as he drank usquebaugh constantly at his waking—to have been in a state of drunkenness for six years," presumed to administer a slap on the face to Mr. Rich, the manager, who returned the blow forthwith; "and, his lordship's face being round and fat, made his cheek ring with the force of it." The death of Rich was voted by the rioters; but the actors Quin, Ryan, Walker, and others gathered round their manager, espousing his cause, and ultimately succeeded in driving the gentlemen from the theatre into the street. Grenadiers were also ordered to attend the representations at the rival theatre in Drury Lane. The exact date of the disappearance of the armed sentinels from the old-fashioned stage-doors can hardly now be determined. A letter published in the 'Adventurer' of November 14th, 1752, upon the subject of pantomimes and the development possible in the future to such diversions, proposes to bring upon the stage The Fable of Hercules and his Labours; introducing the "birds of Stymphalus's lake," which were said to be of such prodigious bigness that they

intercepted the light with their wings, and took up whole men as their prey. "I have got a flock of them, formed of leather covered with ravens' feathers. They are a little unwieldy, I must confess; but I have disposed my wires so as to play them about tolerably well, and make them flap out the candles; and two of the largest are to gulp down the grenadiers stationed at each door of the stage, with their caps, muskets, bayonets, and all their accoutrements." Tate Wilkinson ascribes this letter to Johnson, and alleges that it was provoked by the Drury Lane pantomime of Harlequin Sorcerer. But although Johnson was a contributor to the Adventurer, the letter in question would seem rather to have been written by Dr. Bathurst.

Apart from the subject of stage-doors, but apposite to the question of scenery, Wilkinson makes some curious admissions: "Mistakes, in the matter of scenery, will everywhere occur," he writes; "aye, even in London, where there are numerous servants for every department." He admits that he had often employed the same canvas to represent, in differently, "the wilds of America and St. James's Park;" although aware of the expediency of having something more nearly resembling a view of the park, for the reason that "the place occurs in almost every comedy the scene of which is laid in London." So, too, he had represented "a lonely cottage"

by the help of an interior, through the windows of which a street could be seen, pleading that in busy plays such improprieties could not be avoided; "but the mistake is generally owing to the carpenter, who thinks one chamber as good as another, in the hurry of scenery." "I do aver, however," he continues, "I have treble the amount of scenery of any manager in England, Scotland, or Ireland, out of London; but my stages are too confined, and not having room for many sliding scenes, the drop ones can only be let down from their fixtures; and those fixtures unavoidably, often contradict the work of the play and also the farce, and, from the size of the stage, cannot be altered. Palace wings to prisons and plain chambers are, no doubt, a great and glaring absurdity, but not to be prevented, as in a full piece there is not room to stir; the Hull stage, and all my theatres (York excepted) being intolerably confined in length, breadth, and, indeed, in every part."

It is told of Garrick that, upon a certain occasion, his representation of the character of King Lear had so powerful an effect upon the feelings of one of the grenadiers posted at the stage-door, that he was not only moved to tears, but he even fainted away in the course of the last scene. Garrick's vanity—always susceptible of influence, from whatever quarter—was much excited by this "unsophisticated token of applause." He sent for the sentinel

into the green-room, and presented him with a guinea by way of solace to his wounded feelings, or of recognition of his sympathy as an auditor. Of course the soldier's good fortune soon came to the ears of his comrades, and, accordingly, upon Garrick's next performance, another of the grenadiers on duty at the stage-door took care to swoon away, assured that his pains in that respect would not fail of a like reward to that received by his fellow-soldier on the preceding evening. However, the performance of the night was devoted to comedy, and not tragedy; instead of Lear, Garrick was personating Ranger in the 'Suspicious Husband.' The swooning sentinel failed to obtain the reward he had looked for, and encountered much derision both from the audience and the actors.

Sentinels at the procenium-doors have been seen by modern playgoers only upon such occasions as the state visits of royalty to the theatres, when, during some portion of the evening, beefeaters carrying halberds have usually stood on guard in front of the curtain, and thereby much enhanced the splendour of the spectacle. For some years past, however, royalty has ceased to visit the theatres in state. A guard of grenadiers was also wont to attend all the performances at Drury Lane, Covent-garden, and the Opera-house in the Haymarket. The soldiers did not enter the theatre, but simply mounted guard outside. In his 'Seven

Years of the King's Theatre,' Mr. Ebers states that "the expense of the military guard employed at the door amounts annually to upwards of one hundred and fifty pounds."

In connection with "stage-doors," there is sufficient reason for considering "trap-doors"—the apertures which enable performers and properties to ascend and descend; appearing now above, and now below the stage-boards. These appliances of the theatre are certainly of ancient date; to the Elizabethan dramatists they were well known, at any rate. The "apparitions" of Shakespeare—those in Macbeth and Richard the Third, for instance—must surely have been aided by "traps;" the stage directions usually bid them "rise" and "descend." The witches' cauldron probably sank through the stage; and it was, no doubt, after a similar fashion that the magical banquet in The Tempest vanished, when, to the accompaniment of thunder and lightning, Ariel entered, "like a harpy," and clapped his wings upon the table. Malone quoted Lupton's 'All for Money,' 1578, to establish the use of traps at that date. Money there "vomits forth" Pleasure; and the stage direction is, "Here, with some fine conveyance, Pleasure shall appear from beneath." Mr. Payne Collier doubts whether an absolute rising from beneath the stage was designed by the author; but he points out a stage direction clearly implying the use of a trap-

door, and one of considerable dimensions, in Lodge and Greene's 'Looking-glass for London and England,' 1593, "the magi, with their rods, beat the ground, and from under the same riseth a brave arbour." Moreover, in the same play, "a flame of fire appeareth from beneath, and Radagon is swallowed." In further proof of the early existence of traps, Mr. Collier has noted that, in the opening of Ben Jonson's 'Poetaster,' 1601, "Envy rises in the midst of the stage;" that in Marston's 'Antonio's Revenge,' 1602, Balurdo enters from under the stage; and that in 'The Valiant Welchman,' or the 'Chronicle History of the Life and Valiant Deeds of Caradoc the Great, King of Cambria,' 1615, some such contrivance as a trap must clearly have been employed, seeing that, according to the stage directions, the fairy queen "falls down under the stage;" whereupon Morion follows her, and "falls into a ditch."

Let us now turn to another kind of stage-door—to what, indeed, is now generally understood by a stage-door—the entrance to the theatre set apart for the use of those concerned in the representation; not as public and spectators, but as managers, scene-painters and shifters, actors and actresses, carpenters, gas-fitters, dancers, pantomimists, &c. At this portal—in a sort of sentry-box, or behind a screen of glass, to protect him from the draughts rushing to and from the street and

the stage—sits one of the most important of theatrical functionaries. It is his duty to admit the privileged and to repel the idly-curious, the uninitiated, and the general public from the mysterious regions situate on the farther side of the proscenium; and, moreover, to keep a watchful eye upon the interests, viewed most comprehensively, of his employer the manager. The stage-door is invariably of uninviting aspect—confined, dirty, greasy, leading to narrow and tortuous gas-lighted passages, unpleasantly odorous, situate in some squalid street or shabby alley, in the rear of the theatre; yet it is viewed by many with a sort of mysterious regard and awful interest. The door-keeper is not, as a rule, urbane of manner, or even commonly civil of speech. Surliness is his stock-in-trade, and he is wont to take pride in his severity and peremptoriness. "My principal duty is to keep out the duns," one of these officers once frankly confessed. His mistress—for in this case the lessee of the theatre was a lady—was troubled somewhat by reason of her unpaid bills. Other managers, both male and female, before and since, have suffered in the same way. "I know a dun at once—there is the handwriting of three of them. I never give Madame these letters; they contain bills—large bills—she pays most of the small ones." But usually, all persons whose faces he does not know, and in whose appearance he can

discover no connection with the theatrical profession—and when such connection exists, evidence of it is generally obvious in an almost obtrusive degree—are pronounced by the stage-doorkeeper to "be duns;" the term being understood as applying, not merely to creditors, but to all persons seeking interviews, presenting claims upon his time, such as the manager would very much rather not grant. The stage door-keeper is thus a shield to him, a barrier dividing him from the outside world, a faithful servant and ally, and oftentimes a confidential friend.

Business at the stage-door commences at an early hour. The morning's post brings letters—oftentimes, very many letters. The doorkeeper arranges these in a rack close by his sentry-box. There are notes for the corps de ballet, not less than for the leading ladies and gentlemen of the corps dramatique. Then there are larger packets, these may contain gifts, possibly of elegance and value, tendered by fervent admirers to certain actresses attached to the establishment; or, if addressed to the manager, they more probably enclose manuscripts—plays by aspiring dramatists—submitted for perusal and consideration. The fate of these works rarely corresponds with the hopes or the expectations of their authors. Managers are not, as a rule, kind or polite to playwrights unknown to fame; their distrust of "outsiders" is rooted. Formerly, a reader

was employed alike by managers and publishers to inquire into the nature and merits or demerits of the manuscripts of the unknown; but the managers have dispensed with such an assistant. These are days of "long runs," when but one or two plays can be produced in a season. Why, then, employ anyone to read plays that cannot possibly be represented? There is always a chance that among these despised manuscripts a work of genuine merit may be discovered; but the managers have quite decided that the chance is too slender and remote to be appreciable. Meanwhile, the difficulty of the unknown dramatist, whom no manager will help to become known, is of course very great. Generally, perhaps, he seeks other roads to fame than that which leads through the theatre, and over which "right of way" is denied him. Or by persistent efforts, and careful watching and waiting for an opportunity, he is enabled to break through the manager's guard, and to present himself to the public in the long-hoped-for guise of a dramatist; with such results as the spectators he comes before may, in their wisdom or unwisdom, decree. The door-keeper receives these packets of manuscript. They are stored in a tin box; they are never looked at by the manager, who, when he wants a play, knows, or thinks he knows, where he can obtain one, and addresses himself accordingly to a playwright who has

previously produced plays. The unknown author waits and waits, writes and writes, but nothing of importance happens in consequence. Perhaps, if he is urgent, even to assuming a menacing attitude, he may receive back his play precisely as it left his hands—unread, unseen, unheard of, by the manager. If, however, he is weak and despondent, worn out by deferred hope, he will probably abandon his manuscript altogether, permitting the fates to do what they list with it; when it will surely find its way from the tin box to the butterman's.

At ten o'clock the players arrive—the leader of the band, the figurantes, and the ballet-master. There is a rehearsal, possibly, at half-past ten. All day long there is someone or other passing this way or that in front of the stage doorkeeper. That he may not quit his post, his meals are usually supplied from a neighbouring tavern, and consumed behind his screen. At night comes the representation, and his hands are very full indeed.

"There is no situation in the world where a man can better study his kind than the hall-porter's chair of a London theatre," writes one who had occupied that position of vantage. But discrimination is indispensable to such an officer; he must know whom he can allow to pass his chair, whom to keep waiting in the lobby, and whom to dismiss promptly to the

street. It is especially when his manager is in pecuniary difficulty—and in theatrical management, like the bias inclining the bowl, there is always a sort of secret tendency towards pecuniary difficulty—that the stage-doorkeeper renders really important services. The manager, in avoidance of his creditors or their legal representatives, may lie hidden in his theatre, preferring it to his private residence as a safer retreat. It is the doorkeeper's function to put inquirers off the scent, and, if need be, to deny all knowledge of his master's whereabouts and movements; or the manager may decide upon entering and escaping from his theatre in disguise. In such case he needs must rely upon the connivance and aid of his door-keeper. It is told of a certain famous lessee that he succeeded for some time in baffling the endeavours made to arrest him, by assuming the livery of his own coachman, and, so equipped, boldly driving to and from his theatre. A concluding note upon the subject we will borrow from the authority we have already cited: a writer, calling himself Peter Paterson, who published, some years since, 'The Confessions of a Strolling Comedian.' He has been relating certain of his experiences as a stage-doorkeeper, and he proceeds: "I could write a long chapter upon the people that come here; and upon the company, their hopes and ambitions; but what I have said will serve for a sample of the material at my

command. Here, for instance, comes a mad man. He left a box here about six weeks ago, containing a new invention of his—patent thunder. It may be a good thing, but Jones —the manager—won't look at it; he never has time; and my orders are to put the man off as well as I can. 'Make way for the piano-box' is being shouted along the passage —that is the slang for the exit of Jones. 'He is abroad at present,' is told to the numerous bailiffs, of whom there are always a couple hanging on about the stage-doors; but he is snug behind for all that, and for a considerable time he will be able to make safe exit and entry in that box."

CHAPTER X.

STAGE PROPERTIES.

"In the mean time, I will draw you a bill of properties such as our play wants," says Peter Quince, the carpenter, when the performance of "the most lamentable comedy and most cruel death of 'Pyramus and Thisby'" has been duly agreed upon by the "crew of patches, rude mechanicals that work for bread upon Athenian stalls." "Properties" have been, time out of mind, indispensable to theatrical exhibitions. When Melpomene first appeared, she grasped a "property" dagger; when Thalia entered upon the scene, she carried a "property" pastoral crook. Mr. Tennyson's burden of "Property, property, property," has been from days immemorial a sort of watchword to Thespis and his children.

Upon the Elizabethan stage certain properties were almost of the nature of set-pieces or detached portions of scenes. There were as yet no moveable scenes employed as backgrounds to the figure-pictures formed by

the actors; but the stage was not altogether without furniture or accessories to theatrical illusion. One of the earliest of properties was a representation of "hell-mouth," very frequently employed in the performance of miracle plays and morals. Malone's liberal quotations from the Diary or Account Book of Henslowe, the manager, under date March 10, 1598–9—the original work has unfortunately disappeared from Dulwich College, where it had long been preserved—supply curious information touching the properties, machinery, and fittings of our early stage. It is clear that rocks and steeples, trees and beacons, pictures now of Mother Redcap and now of Tasso,—in plays by Munday and Drayton and Dekker,—were freely brought upon the stage, in addition to such properties, in the stricter sense of the term, as musical instruments, weapons, armour, clubs, fans, feathers, crosiers, sceptres, skins of beasts, coffins and bedsteads, bulls' and boars' heads, a chariot for Phaeton, a trident for Neptune, wings for Mercury, a mitre for the Pope, a cauldron to be employed in the 'Jew of Malta,' and a dragon—one of the "terrible monsters made of brown paper" ridiculed by Stephen Gosson in 1581—to figure in the 'Faustus' of Marlowe. A mysterious item, "the Moris lymes," is supposed by Malone to refer to the limbs of Aaron the Moor in 'Titus Andronicus,' who in the original

play was probably tortured on the stage; in the same way, "for the playe of Faeton the limes dead," may be understood to represent the remains of the hero of Dekker's 'Sun's Darling,' after his fatal fall.

Mr. Payne Collier cites certain manuscript plays by William Percy, written probably about 1600, which are prefaced by a list of the properties requisite for their due performance. These are of the simplest kind—"a ladder of roapes and a long fourme" being prominent items—and were employed to vary the aspect of the stage, so that the spectator might persuade himself that the scene represented now Harwich, now Colchester, and now Maldon. A note to one of the plays explains that even the humble accessories contained in the list might be dispensed with upon occasion: "Now, if so be that the properties of any of these that be outward will not serve the turn by reason of concourse of people on the stage, then you may omit the said properties which be outward and supply their places with their nuncupations only in text letters." From this rather vague stage direction it may be gathered that for a "property"—a tree, a tower, a rock, &c.—was often substituted a mere inscription, such as reminded the spectator that he must understand the tapestry enclosing the stage to represent, now Thebes, now Rhodes, and now the Temple of Mahomet: wherever, in

fact, the events dealt with by the dramatist were supposed to occur. We learn, on Mr. Collier's authority, that the technical word "properties" was applied to the appurtenances of the stage as early as the reign of Henry VI. in the 'Castle of Perseverance,' one of the oldest Moral Plays in the language. In an account of the furniture, &c., required for the play of 'St George' at Basingborne in the year 1511, the terms "properties" and "property making" are both used, the tire-man or wardrobe-keeper being called "the garment man." In the "brief estimate" of the revels at Court in 1563–4 the "properties" for five plays at Windsor are several times mentioned.

In 'The Gull's Horn Book,' 1609, there is humorous and minute advice to the gallants who, seated on three-legged stools, at a charge of sixpence each, crowded the stage, much to the annoyance of the actors and the audience in the other parts of the house: "Present yourself not on the stage, especially at a new play, until the quaking prologue has by rubbing got colour into his cheeks, and is ready to give the trumpets their cue that he is upon the point to enter; for then it is time, *as though you were one of the properties*, or that you dropped out of the hangings, to creep from behind the arras, with your tripos or three-footed stool in one hand, and a TESTON [sixpence] mounted be-

tween a forefinger and a thumb in the other; for if you should bestow your person upon the vulgar, when the house is but half full, your apparel is quite eaten up, the fashion lost, and the proportion of your body in more danger to be devoured than if it were served up in the counter amongst the poultry."

> He has got into our tiring-house amongst us,
> And ta'en a strict survey of all our properties,

says Byeplay, referring to Peregrine in Brome's comedy of 'The Antipodes,' 1640, and a description follows of various theatrical properties, "our jigambobs and trinkets," and other scenic accessories:

> Our statues and our images of gods,
> Our planets and our constellations,
> Our giants, monsters, furies, beasts, and bugbears,
> Our helmets, shields and vizors, hairs and beards,
> Our pasteboard marchpanes and our wooden pies . . .

Peregrine is a sort of Quixote, and acts accordingly:

> Whether he thought 'twas some enchanted castle,
> Or temple hung and piled with monuments
> Of uncouth and of various aspects,
> I dive not to his thoughts; wonder he did
> Awhile, it seemed, but yet undaunted stood;
> When, on a sudden, with thrice knightly force,
> And thrice, thrice puissant arm, he snatcheth down
> The sword and shield that I played Bevis with,
> Rusheth amongst the foresaid properties,
> Kills monster after monster, takes the puppets
> Prisoners, knocks down the Cyclops, tumbles all
> Our jigambobs and trinkets to the wall.
> Spying at last the crown and royal robes
> I' th' upper wardrobe, next to which by chance
> The devil's vizors hung, and their flame-painted
> Skin-coats, these he removed with greater fury,

> And (having cut the infernal ugly faces
> All into mammocks) with a reverend hand
> He takes the imperial diadem, and crowns
> Himself King of the Antipodes, and believes
> He has justly gained the kingdom by his conquest.

In the 'Tatler,' No. 42, Addison supplies a humorous list of properties, alleged to be for sale in consequence of the closing of Drury Lane Theatre. Notice is given, in mimicry of an auctioneer's advertisement, that a "magnificent palace with great variety of gardens, statues, and waterworks, may be bought cheap in Drury Lane, where there are likewise several castles to be disposed of, very delightfully situated; as also groves, woods, forests, fountains, and country seats with very pleasant prospects on all sides of them: being the *moveables* of Christopher *Rich*, Esquire, [the manager,] who is giving up housekeeping, and has many curious pieces of furniture to dispose of, which may be seen between the hours of six and ten in the evening. Among the items enumerated appear the following:

> A new moon, something decayed.
> A rainbow a little faded.
> A setting sun.
> A couch very finely gilt and little used, with a pair of dragons, to be sold cheap.
> Roxana's nightgown.
> Othello's handkerchief.
> A serpent to sting Cleopatra.
> An imperial mantle made for Cyrus the Great, and worn by Julius Cæsar, Bajazet, King Henry VIII., and Signor Valentini.
> The imperial robes of Xerxes, never worn but once.

This was an allusion to Cibber's feeble

tragedy of 'Xerxes,' which was produced at the Lincoln's-Inn-Fields Theatre in 1699, and permitted one performance only:

The whiskers of a Turkish bassa.
The complexion of a murderer in a bandbox: consisting of a large piece of burnt cork and a coal-black peruke.
A suit of clothes for a ghost, viz. a bloody shirt, a doublet curiously pinked, and a coat with three great eyelet holes upon the breast.
Six elbow chairs, very expert in country dances, with six flower-pots for their partners. . . .

These articles of furniture, of a mechanical or trick sort, employed in pantomimes, are referred to in a letter published at a later date in the 'Spectator' from William Screene, who describes himself as having acted "several parts of household stuff with great applause for many years. I am," he continues, "one of the men in the hangings of the Emperor of the Moon; I have twice performed the third chair in an English opera; and have rehearsed the pump in the 'Fortune Hunters.'" Another correspondent, Ralph Simple, states that he has "several times acted one of the finest flower-pots in the same opera wherein Mr. Screene is a chair," &c.

A plume of feathers never used but by Œdipus and the Earl of Essex.
Modern plots, commonly known by the name of trapdoors, ladders of rope, vizard masques, and tables with broad carpets over them.
A wild boar killed by Mrs. Tofts and Dioclesian.

Mrs. Tofts, as the Amazonian heroine of the opera of 'Camilla,' by Marc Antonio Buononcini, was required to slay a wild boar upon

the stage. A letter published in the 'Spectator' professed to be written by the performer of the wild boar: "Mr. Spectator,—Your having been so humble as to take notice of the epistles of other animals emboldens me, who am the wild boar that was killed by Mrs. Tofts, to represent to you that I think I was hardly used in not having the part of the lion in 'Hydaspes' given to me.... As for the little resistance which I made, I hope it may be excused when it is considered that the dust was thrown at me by so fair a hand."

The list concludes:

There are also swords, halberds, sheephooks, cardinals' hats, turbans, drums, gallipots, a gibbet, a cradle, a rack, a cartwheel, an altar, a helmet, a back-piece, a breast-plate, a bell, a tub, and a jointed baby.

But this supposititious catalogue is scarcely more comical than the genuine inventory of properties, &c., belonging to the Theatre Royal in Crow Street, Dublin, 1776. A few of the items may be quoted:

Bow, quiver, and bonnet for Douglas.
Jobson's bed. (For the farce of 'The Devil to Pay.')
Juliet's bier.
Juliet's balcony.
A small map for Lear.
Tomb for the Grecian Daughter.
One shepherd's hat.
Four small paper tarts.
Three pasteboard covers for dishes.
An old toy fiddle.
One goblet.
Twenty-eight candlesticks for dressing, and six washing basins, one broke, and four black pitchers.
Eleven metal thunder-bolts, sixty-seven wood ditto, five stone ditto.

Three baskets for thunder balls.
Rack in 'Venice Preserved.'
Elephant in 'The Enchanted Lady,' very bad.
Alexander's car.
One pair of sea-horses.
Six gentlemen's helmets.
Altar piece in 'Theodosius.'
The statue of Osiris.
Water-fall.
Frost scene in 'King Arthur.'
One sedan chair for the pantomime.
The scaffold in 'Venice Preserved.'
Several old pantomime tricks and useless pieces of scenes.

The maker of properties, although an important aid to theatrical representations, is never seen by the audience; he is of scarcely less value to the stage than the scene-painter, but he is never called before the curtain to be publicly congratulated upon his exploits. His manufactory or workshop is usually in some retired part of the theatre. He lives in a world of his own—a world of shams. His duty is to make the worse appear the better article; to obtain acceptance for forgeries, to create, not realities, but semblances. He does not figure among the *dramatis personæ;* but what a significant part he plays! Tragedy and comedy, serious ballet and Christmas pantomime, are alike to him. He appears in none of them, but he pervades them all; his unseen presence is felt as a notable influence on every side. He provides the purse of gold with which the rich man relieves the necessities of his poor interlocutor, the bank notes that are stolen, the will that disinherits, the parchments long lost but found

at last, which restore the rightful heir to the family possessions. The assassin's knife, the robber's pistol, the soldier's musket, the sailor's cutlass, the court sword of genteel comedy, the basket-hilted blade that works such havoc in melodrama, all these proceed from his armoury; while from his kitchen, so to speak, issue alike the kingly feasts, consisting usually of wooden apples and Dutch-metal-smeared goblets, and the humbler meals spread in cottage interiors or furnished lodgings, the pseudo legs of mutton, roast fowls or pork chops—to say nothing of those joints of meat, shoals of fish, and pounds of sausages inseparable from what are called the "spill and pelt" scenes of harlequinade.

Of late years, however, our purveyors of theatrical entertainments, moved by much fondness for reality, have shown a disposition to limit the labours of the property-maker, to dispense with his simulacra as much as possible, and to employ instead the actualities he but seeks to mimic and shadow forth. Costly furniture is now often hired or purchased from fashionable upholsterers. Genuine china appears where once pasteboard fabrications did duty—real oak-carvings banish the old substitutes of painted canvas stretched on deal laths and "profiled," to resort to the technical term, with a small sharp saw. The property-maker, with his boards and battens, his wicker-work and gold leaf, his paints and

glue and size, his shams of all kinds, is almost banished from the scene. The stage accessories become so substantial that the actors begin to wear a shadowy look—especially when they are required to represent rather unlife-like characters. Real horses, real dogs, real water, real pumps and washing tubs are now supplemented by real *bric-à-brac*, *bijouterie*, and drawing-room knick-knackery. Faith has been lost, apparently, in the art of stage illusion; the spectators must be no longer duped, things must be what they seem. But this system of furnishing the stage with actualities, or of combining the real with the imaginary, with a view to enhancing scenic effect, is not absolutely an innovation—at least, some hints may be found of it in Addison's account of the opera of his time. While allowing that an opera—and entertainments dependent upon spectacle for their success were included in that term—might be extravagantly lavish in its decorations—its only object being "to gratify the senses and keep up an indolent attention in the audience"—he urged that common sense should be respected, and that there should be nothing childish and absurd in the scenes and machines. "How would the wits of King Charles's time have laughed to have seen Nicolini exposed to a tempest in robes of ermine, and sailing in an open boat in a sea of pasteboard! What a field of raillery would they have been let into

had they been entertained with painted dragons spitting wildfire, enchanted chariots drawn by Flanders mares, and real cascades in artificial landscapes! A little skill in criticism would inform us that shadows and realities ought not to be mixed together in the same piece; and that the scenes which are designed as the representations of nature should be filled with resemblances and not with the things themselves. If one would represent a wide champaign country filled with herds and flocks, it would be ridiculous to draw the country only upon the scenes and to crowd several parts of the stage with sheep and oxen. This is joining together inconsistencies and making the decoration partly real and partly imaginary."

Pursuing the subject, he relates how sparrows have been purchased for the opera house—"to enter towards the end of the first act and to fly about the stage . . . to act the part of singing birds in a delightful grove." Upon a nearer inquiry, however, he finds that, "though they flew in sight, the music proceeded from a concert of flageolets and bird-calls which were planted behind the scenes." So many sparrows, however, had been let loose in the opera of 'Rinaldo,' that it was feared the house would never get rid of them, and that in other plays they might make their entrance in very improper scenes, so as to be seen flying in a lady's bed-chamber or

perching upon a king's throne. "I am credibly informed," he continues, "that there was once a design of casting into an opera the story of Whittington and his Cat, and that in order to it there had been got together a great quantity of mice; but Mr. Rich, the proprietor of the play-house, very prudently considered that it would be impossible for the cat to kill them all, and that consequently the princes of the stage might be as much infested with mice as the prince of the island was before the cat's arrival upon it; for which reason he would not permit it to be acted in his house." In conclusion, he mentions a proposal to furnish the next performance of the opera with a real orange grove from Messrs. Loudon and Wise, the Queen's gardeners at this time, and to secure a number of tomtits to personate the singing birds, "the undertakers being resolved to spare neither pains nor money for the gratification of the audience."

A new performance being in course of preparation, the property-maker is duly furnished with a "plot" or list of the articles required of his department, there being also plots or lists for the heads of other departments: a scene-painter's plot, a carpenter's scene plot, and a tailor's plot, setting forth the dresses necessary to the representation. In the pantomime season, or whenever any great pageant or spectacle is to be produced, these plots are of prodigious extent. They

are fairly written on long slips of paper—like the bills of fare in coffee-rooms—and may be some yards in length. The property-maker affixes his list to the wall of his workshop, and subjects it to very careful study. Every item must be considered and remembered. Here is the authentic property plot of the first three scenes of the famous pantomime of 'Mother Goose':

SCENE I.—Thunder, &c.; stick for Mother Goose; favours for villagers; huntsman's whip; staff for beadle.
SCENE II.—Golden egg; goose.
SCENE III.—Three chairs; a knife and stick for pantaloon; a sword for harlequin; two pistols to fire behind the scenes.

And so on through a score of scenes.

'Mother Goose' was really a very simple affair, however. The property plot of modern pantomimes is more after this fashion:

SCENE I.—Twelve demons' heads; twelve three-pronged spears; twelve pairs demons' wings; twelve tails; one dragon, to vomit fire, and with tail to move. One cauldron to burn blue; demon king's head; one red-hot poker; four owls with movable eyes, to change to green imps; twelve squibs, to light on demons' tails. Red fire.
SCENE II. FAIRY SCENE.—Twenty-four silver helmets for ballet, eight superior; twenty-four javelins for ditto, eight superior; twenty-four silver shields, eight superior; twenty-four garlands of flowers, eight superior; silver car for fairy queen, with silver star at back to revolve; Cupid's bow and arrows; one dove, to fly off; one plum-pudding, to walk; six mince pies, to walk; one turkey and sausages to sing and dance. White fire.

The eight superior articles, it may be noted, are for the ladies in the front rank of the ballet, who are brought more prominently before the spectators, and are usually the more skilled and comely of the troop. At the

back of the stage, inferiority of aspect and accomplishment, together with the evidences of time's assaults and injuries, are supposed to escape observation.

The duties of the property-man are very multifarious. Is a snow-storm required? He provides the snow, and showers or drifts it from the flies. Are figures or objects to be seen crossing the distant landscape, the river or the bridge? He cuts them out of pasteboard and fits them with wires that may be jerked this way and that. Does the situation require a railway collision, a burning house, a sinking ship, or an earthquake? The property-man will take the order and promptly execute it. Steam shall be seen to issue from funnels, engines shall shriek, mines shall explode, waves shall mount, flames flicker, lightnings flash, and thunder roar, rafters fall, and sparks and smoke and fearful salpetrous fumes fill the theatre—all at the bidding of the property-man.

Nor is he more necessary to pantomime and melodrama than to Shakespeare. Grimaldi, indeed, upon occasions, finding a scarcity of the appliances necessary to the business of harlequinade, resorted to the public markets, and made live pigs, ducks, and geese do duty for the usual property animals—the property-man, very likely, thinking poorly of such efforts of nature in comparison with the works of art he would

have produced had time permitted; just as Mr. Johnson, the machinist of Covent Garden, viewing Chunee, the real elephant at Drury Lane, is reported to have said: "I should be very sorry if I couldn't make a better elephant than that!" But as a rule no performance is possible without the property-man. What, for instance, would 'Macbeth' be, bereft of its properties: its witches' cauldron, eye of newt and toe of frog, apparitions, torches, crowned kings, the dagger with which Duncan is slain and the bloodstains which are afterwards to render Macbeth's hands "a sorry sight"? How could 'Hamlet' be played without the partisans of Francisco and Bernardo, the fencing foils for the last scene, the poisoned cup out of which Gertrude is inadvertently to drink, the book Hamlet is to read, denouncing its slanders, the miniature portraits upon which he is to descant, and that famous skull—once adorning the shoulders of Yorick, the king's jester—over which he is to muse?

This skull seems oftentimes to have been no figment or property of pasteboard, but a real thing—there being so many skulls about in the world, and obtainable at a small cost—although there is a story told of a sheep's head being brought on as a property to serve the purpose of the scene, and enable Hamlet to meditate as usual and point the accustomed morals. This involved a bad compliment to

the departed Yorick, however, and assumed the complete ignorance of the audience in regard to comparative anatomy. Nor is it to be believed that Hamlet could seriously repeat his philosophical speeches, gazing steadily the while at the straightened forehead of the innocent sheep. Macready relates in his Diary of his performing 'Hamlet' at Boston, U.S., in 1848: "Was struck at the grave scene with the extraordinary weight of the skull which was given to me. I thought it was loaded; then it occurred to me it might be filled with earth—but no. Mr. Ayling observed to me it might be a negro's skull; looking at the receding forehead, I perceived it was so. But, directly, this circumstance seemed to confirm to me Agassiz's theory, that the brain did not develop itself after childhood; the brain does not grow, but the bone does. The weight of this skull went in confirmation of this ingenious theory." Of a subsequent performance at Richmond in the same year he writes: "Acted Hamlet, taking much pains, and, as I thought, acting well; but the audience testified neither sensibility nor enthusiasm, and I suppose it was either not good or 'caviare to the general.'" They gave me the skull, for Yorick's, of a negro who was hung two years ago for cutting down his overseer."

"One man in his time plays many parts."

Did George Frederick Cooke, the tragedian, when he personated Hamlet—he must have been a very indifferent Hamlet—ever think that his skull would be handled by a later Hamlet and appear upon the scene as the skull of Yorick? This strange event came to pass. Cooke died in 1812, and was buried in the strangers' vault of St. Paul's Church, New York. Some ten years later Kean, fulfilling an engagement in America, resolved that due honour should be paid to the remains of the departed tragedian, whose memory he affected to hold in extraordinary veneration. With the permission of Bishop Hobart, the body was removed from the strangers' vault to the public burial-ground of the parish, and a handsome monument was erected at Kean's expense. Many lamenting friends and admirers attended the ceremony: "Tears fell from Kean's eyes in abundance," writes Dr. Francis, who relates the story in his 'Old New York.' But in the transfer of the coffin from the vault to the grave the dead actor's body was subjected to strange mutilation. Kean possessed himself of one of the toe-bones; "it was a little black relic, and might have passed for a tobacco-stopper." Some other devotee stole the head; Dr. Francis may not have been the thief, but he became the receiver. He writes: "I may here perhaps invade the sanctity of burial transaction; but the co-

currence to which I allude is innocent, and may be deemed curious as well as rare. A theatrical benefit had been announced at the Park, and 'Hamlet' the play. A subordinate of the theatre hurried to my office at a late hour for a skull; I was compelled to loan the head of my old friend George Frederick Cooke. "Alas, poor Yorick!" It was returned in the morning, but on the ensuing evening, at a meeting of the Cooper Club, the circumstance becoming known to several of the members, and a general desire being expressed to investigate phrenologically the head of the great tragedian, the article was again released from its privacy, when Daniel Webster, Henry Wheaton, and many others who enriched the meeting of that night, applied the principles of craniological science to the interesting specimen before them. The head was pronounced capacious, the function of animality amply developed; the height of the forehead ordinary; the space between the orbits of unusual breadth, giving proofs of strong perceptive powers; the transverse basilar portion of the skull of corresponding width. Such was the phrenology of Cooke. This scientific exploration added to the variety and gratification of that memorable evening. Cooper felt, as a coadjutor of Albinus, and Cooke enacted a great part that night."

The toe-bone appropriated by Kean was

not to be used as a property, but treasured as a relic of "the greatest creature that ever walked the earth:" for so the dead tragedian was described by the living. His first words to his wife on his return from America were, "I have brought Charles a fortune. I have brought something that the Directors of the British Museum would give ten thousand pounds for! But they sha'n't have it." On special occasions he compelled his friends and associates to go down upon their knees and reverently kiss the precious relic. There can be little doubt that the actor's intellects were at this time seriously deranged. The toe-bone was placed upon the mantel-piece; Mrs. Kean and the servants were strictly enjoined not to touch it upon any pretence whatever. It remained unmolested for several months. Occasionally the actor explained its merits to an intelligent visitor, otherwise it received his sole homage. "His wife detested it. The servants hated it. The maids were afraid of it. . . . At last—it was one dull evening, when Kean had been absent from home for several days, and his wife was tired of waiting and watching for him—the detested toe-bone presented itself to her sight, a few bitter words escaped her, . . . she eyed the object of her husband's adoration with the most sincere disgust. . . . Finally she seized it, protecting her fingers with a piece of paper, and threw it out of window!

Kean, discovering his loss, was furious. His wife held her peace. It was in vain that he examined and cross-examined the servants. "Mary," he said at length, in tones of the deepest melancholy, "your son has lost his fortune. He was worth 10,000*l*. Now he is a beggar!"

When Macready produced 'As You Like It,' with great completeness, at Drury Lane in 1842, he was anxious to procure a real deer-skin for exhibition in the forest scenes, and by way of illustration of the song "What shall he have that killed the deer?" The Duke of Beaufort seems to have gathered that some difficulty had arisen in the matter. Macready enters in his Diary: "The Duke of Beaufort called and inquired of me about the deer-skin I wanted for 'As You Like It.' He very courteously and kindly said he would send to Badminton, and if there was not one ready he would desire his keeper to send one express. It was extremely kind," concludes the tragedian, evidently deeply touched by the ducal interest in a stage property.

Only one word more about stage properties.

Mr. Three-stars, the eminent tragedian about to appear for the first time upon a provincial stage, made express inquiries concerning "the acoustic properties" of the house. Thereupon the anxious property-man

rushed into the presence of the manager. "We have not got all the properties yet, sir; Mr. Three-stars wants the acoustic properties." "Get them at once, then; let Mr. Three-stars have everything he wants!" was the prompt reply of the energetic manager.

CHAPTER XI.

STAGE TRADITIONS.

STAGE traditions are, as the heirlooms of the house of Thespis, handed down from generation to generation, and usually much prized and cherished, because of their real worth, or merely because of their antquiity, and long connection with the family. There are histrionic traditions that at once brace and adorn like a baldric or a bracelet; and there are traditions that are in the nature of manacles, they so oppress and prison the players.

The Théâtre Français is an institution winning and deserving much admiration. It receives a subsidy from the state, in that it may perfect its exhibitions, foster the fine-art of acting, and specially preserve the traditional method of representing the grander examples of the French drama. It is required to justify its existence by performing, every season, certain of the plays of Corneille, of Racine, and of Molière; it is invested with almost despotic powers in regard to the repertories and the companies of the other theatres of

Paris; it provides its used and decayed members with pensions. The Théâtre Français may not be regarded, however, as an unmixed blessing. An Englishman, after sad contemplation of his native play-houses, is fairly entitled to consider with sympathy and approval, the proceedings of the Comédie; but in France the Comédie has been often subjected to the criticism and the disparagement which are wont to form the portion of a prophet in his own country.

It is something to play Molière precisely as he was played two centuries ago; to reproduce the scene as he knew it, even to details of furnishing and decoration, and with reverence for certain forms of humour, that must nowadays appeal rather to antiquaries than to artists. Nevertheless the Comédie's devotion to tradition is a chief charge brought against it. The players of the Français have been often credited with being the tenth transmitters of the conventionalisms of the theatre. There are weak brethren among the company, who conceive that the sole end of playing is to hold the mirror up, not to nature, but to past portrayers of her. They are for ever looking at life through the spectacles of other people. Their warrant for doing this or that consists in the fact that it was so done by earlier actors. If they play tragedy, it is with the tones and attitudes of Lekain and Talma. Their comedy is founded upon the

mannerisms of defunct comedians. They are treasuries of traditions. They can relate and teach how Legrange bore his sword, how Baron raised his hat, how Damus stood up, how Molé sat down. They know precisely Lekain's inflection of voice in his famous exclamation, "Qu'il mourût!" and how long a breath Clairon drew between her "O haine de Vénus!" and the words that follow "O fatale colère!" And they invariably reply with shrugged shoulders, and more or less of disdain—"the traditions of the stage"—when enquiry is made as to their authority on the subject, or if suggestion be offered that possibly there has been imperfect transmission of the doctrines they preach, and a certain loss of value in their passage from mouth to mouth, or from hand to hand. With them originality is nothing. They value in no degree independent study, spontaneity, or impulse, or inspiration. They count the traditions of the theatre as the be-all and the end-all of acting.

These, be it remembered, are accusations brought against the Français by Frenchmen, who are apt to hold in contempt what they designate as the suranné, the perruque, the rococo. It was in the days of the struggle between the romantic and the classical drama, that the Français especially incurred the reproaches of the satirical. Naturally it had resisted change; it had sided with the classicists; it had stood on guard, and at bay,

before the ancient repertory. Of course, the romantic drama of Hugo and of Dumas triumphed at last; and mediæval costumes, velvet pourpoints, short cloaks and plumed hats, long rapiers and high boots, appeared upon the boards so long occupied by the severe draperies of Rome and Greece. And scenic effects were now permitted, of even a startling kind, where once a rude simplicity of illusion had prevailed. For the Français had become notorious for the shabbiness of its mise-en-scène, for its frayed and threadbare costumes, its faded and soiled canvases. And the age and infirmity which afflicted scenic decorations, had fallen also upon its company; the lovers had become remarkable instances of longevity, the ingénues were approaching their second childhood, heroes and heroines alike had grown gray in the service of the stage. Amendment was effected in these respects. It was recognised at last that the stage could not live by traditions alone, that the drama should not feed solely upon its own secretions, so to speak, but should be nourished and supported with fresh food. The sociétaires of the Comédie, nowadays, cherish the memory of their predecessors, without striving to imitate them servilely, to tread only in their footprints. As of old, in accordance with the terms of the subvention, representative plays pertaining to the classical repertory are systematically produced—the tra-

ditions of Molière are respected in 'Le Malade Imaginaire.' M. Fleurant, the apothecary, still enters carrying a certain medical implement in his hand, and M. Thomas Diafoirus still sits upon a pantomimically tall chair; but the Français is not less famous for its performances of modern comedy and drama. It may be said indeed that the Théâtre Français of to-day, while still professing faith in the traditions of the past, thrives mainly by producing new plays.

A letter written in 1855 from Paris, by Charles Dickens, contains amusing, if irreverent, mention of the Théâtre Français and its histrionic method at that date. "There is a dreary classicality at that establishment, calculated to freeze the marrow. Even one's best friends there are at times very aggravating. One tires of seeing a man through any number of acts, remembering everything by patting his forehead with the flat of his hand, jerking out sentences by shaking himself, and piling them up in pyramids over his head with his right forefinger. And they have a generic, small comedy-farce, where you see two sofas and three little tables, to which a man enters with his hat on, to talk to another man; and in respect of which you know exactly when he will get up from one sofa to sit on the other, and take his hat off one table to put it upon the other; which strikes one quite as ludicrously as a good farce."

He used, as his biographer relates, to talk whimsically of the theatre in the Rue de Richelieu, as "a kind of tomb, where you went as the Eastern people did in the stories, to think of your unsuccessful loves and dead relations."

Our own stage is under no legal obligation to respect the past, or to reproduce its dramatic literature; yet regard for the conventional has been rarely lacking in the English theatre; "staginess" has been seldom absent from our boards. The force of tradition asserts itself alike in the representation of the poetic or legitimate drama, and in the comedies of modern life, requiring of the player movements and actions only of a simple, easy, and natural kind. Certain histrionic conventions seem to govern him in spite of himself. There is somehow a suspicion, or a savour, of the theatre in all he does; in his way of drawing on or drawing off his gloves, of smoothing his hat—its white lining being well exhibited to the pit, of producing his cambric handkerchief, of lighting a cigar, of reclining in an easy-chair, of reading a book or a letter. When he speaks, when he listens, when he laughs, when he weeps; perhaps, especially, when he weeps, burying his face in his hands, resting his elbows on a table, projecting one leg, and imparting an hypothenuse slope to his figure, he is alike artificially natural, and, so to speak, unreally real. Of late years, a traditional vivacity in con-

nection with light comedy—coming down to us, perhaps, from Woodward and Palmer, King and Dodd, Lewis and Jones—has undergone some suppression. Restlessness and bustle upon the boards are less in vogue than once they were. The light comedian, wont to run or to trip lightly on to the stage, waving his hat, or flourishing his cane, laughing and chattering in a breathless way, and for ever doing something; contemplating his reflection in the pier-glass, arranging his chair, or his cravat, or his wristbands, plunging jocosely at the ribs of his interlocutors—a performance, known professionally as the "sly dog business"—dusting his boots with his handkerchief—odious practice! Never still an instant; toying with all the properties and furniture of the scene, meddling with trappings, and patting and haling hither and thither the other characters in the play—this animated and frisky performer is rarely seen nowadays. It is the fancy of our players of the present, that they are necessarily life-like because they are dull. They act in a numb sort of way; torpidity characterises their speeches, they speak with drawling deliberation, they pause long in their intervals of utterance, lethargy and languor oppress their every movement. It is not to be said that they imitate humanity abominably, but they reproduce a class of personages whom one would much rather avoid, than become acquainted with.

It is due to stage tradition, that red hair is always associated with comicality, and, when combined with a chintz waistcoat, invariably signifies rustic integrity; that a flaxen wig is typical of youth and frivolity; that black locks and wickedness are inseparable. Lloyd, in his poem of The Actor, 1762, writes:

> To suit the dress demands the actor's art,
> Yet there are those who overdress the part:
> To some prescriptive right gives settled things,
> Black wigs to murderers, feathered hats to kings.

And he proceeds to record other conventions of the stage—

> But Michael Cassio might be drunk enough,
> Though all his features were not grimed with snuff.
> Why should Poll Peachum shine in satin clothes,
> Why every devil dance in scarlet hose?

"Pray what is the meaning," demanded Charles the Second, "that we never see a rogue in the play, but, odsfish! they always clap him on a black periwig, when, it is well-known, one of the greatest rogues in England always wears a fair one?" The king is supposed to have been thinking of the blond peruke of Dr. Titus Oates. Of late years Hamlet has been seen upon the stage wearing flaxen locks, appropriate, it has been urged, to his Danish nationality. For the same reason, Claudius might wear a fair wig; yet who ever saw the murderous king so attired? The old practice of smearing

Cassio's face with snuff, to denote his intoxicated condition, has been long since abandoned; but heroines of the Polly Peachum class are still apt to appear in satin clothes. The Adinas, and Aminas, and Zerlinas of the opera-house, when interpreted by such singers as Madame Patti and Mdlle. Albani, are wont to be very splendidly apparelled. Mephistopheles and his diabolical connections, are still faithful to the scarlet hose they first assumed so very long since.

The tragedy of Hamlet has attached to it many strange traditions, but these have undergone some disregard in later times. In Garrick's time, during the first scene of the play, it was customary for one of the performers to imitate the crowing of a cock, so that the Ghost might have practical cause for starting "like a guilty thing upon a fearful summons." We read, however, that the cock-crowing "being often unskilfully executed, threw an air of ridicule over the performance," and was eventually dispensed with. It is still usual for our Hamlets to pace the platform of the castle wearing black silk stockings the while, and after complaining of the coldness of the night, to divest themselves of cloak and hat immediately upon the appearance of the Ghost, as though bent upon a wrestling-match with that perturbed spirit. At one time it was usual for Hamlet to address the Ghost with

extraordinary violence. Cibber relates that, when witnessing with Addison a performance of the tragedy, they were both surprised at the vociferous manner of Hamlet's speech to the Ghost. "Which, though it might have astonished, had not provoked him." Booth, who personated the Ghost, was of the same opinion, and remonstrated with Wilks, the performer of Hamlet. "I thought, Bob, that last night you wanted to play at fisticuffs with me; you bullied that which you ought to have revered." Lloyd writes, probably with Garrick's Hamlet in view:

> More nature oft and finer strokes are shewn
> In the low whisper than tempestuous tone.
> And Hamlet's hollow voice and fixed amaze,
> More powerful terror to the mind conveys,
> Than he who swollen with big impetuous rage
> Bullies the bulky phantom off the stage.

Macready and the earlier Hamlets were accustomed to follow the description furnished by Ophelia, and to signify the madness of their hero, by appearing with one stocking, "fouled, ungartered, and downgyved to his ankle." Mr. Wopsle, it may be remembered, when, assuming the name of Waldengarver, he played Hamlet, wore his stocking disordered—"its disorder expressed, according to usage, by one very neat fold in the top, which I suppose to be always got up with a flat iron." Mr. Charles Kean seems to have been the first Hamlet who abandoned this

stage tradition. Mr. Bunn writes of Charles Kean's performance at Drury-lane in 1838: "It is literally a relief to see a Hamlet not resorting to the vulgarism of having a stocking dangling at his heel, to prove the distemper of his mind." Mr. Bunn finds further relief in the abandonment of another stage tradition, which ordained that the First Gravedigger should amuse the gallery by taking off an absurd series of waistcoats before beginning to dig. The Gravedigger of 1838, it may be noted, was the late Mr. Compton—the Gravedigger to Mr. Irving's Hamlet of 1874. Leigh Hunt writes in his 'Tatler' of a performance of Hamlet in 1831: "We were glad to see the folly of the Gravedigger's half-dozen waistcoats discontinued. There is nothing in the author to warrant it." Thereupon, a correspondent addressed a letter to the editor of 'The Tatler' defending the old practice: "As to its being folly, if it be so, it is an exquisite bit of fooling, never failing to excite the merriment of the audience, without injuring the progress of the play. And as to its not having the authority of the text to warrant it, the writer of the remark is, perhaps, not aware that, what is technically termed stage business, under which head it comes, is handed down from actor to actor, and that the joke of the six waistcoats has flourished from time immemorial, the oldest actors being unable to trace its origin. Is it not, therefore, more

than probable that it is a fancy of Shakespeare himself?" Leigh Hunt appends a good-natured note: "We think our correspondent's suggestion not unlikely; and do hereby give our critical warrant for the preservation of a due respect for this venerable piece of buffoonery." Nevertheless, the tradition of the six waistcoats incurred at last neglect and contempt which were strictly its due.

Upon the entry of the Ghost in the Closet Scene, Hamlet was wont "to kick down his chair, which, by making a sudden noise, it was imagined, would contribute to the perturbation and terror of the incident." In furtherance of this stage trick, Garrick had a chair specially contrived to fall at the lightest touch—"the cabriole feet being tapered, and placed so much under the seat." Henderson was censured for his disregard of tradition in his performance of Hamlet. "In our opinion," wrote a critic assuming the name of Scourge, "Mr. Henderson, departing from the established custom of the theatre, by sometimes neglecting to kick down the chair on the appearance of the Ghost, which was never omitted by the greatest actor who ever graced the stage, and not having always got quit of his hat when he starts in the first scene, is a violation of dramatic decorum, and deserves severe reprehension. Deviations so slight as to evade the common eye, and innovations so

trifling as to be thought unworthy of notice, have led the way to heresies in religion, and the abolishment of order in civil government. Let us nip error in the bud, and not by our silence give sanction to impropriety. Being once right, let us remain so!" These are brave words; it is not recorded that they greatly affected Henderson's method of performance. He was an actor who thought for himself, and was remarkable for the intelligence and originality of his efforts upon the scene. A certain innovation in his treatment of the pictures in the Closet Scene of Hamlet was condemned, not for its own demerits, but because it was "too violent for a young man" making his first appearance in an important character. It seemed that he whirled the portrait of Claudius far from him. The pictures of the kings, we many note, have been the subject of varying traditions. According to Davies, it had been the practice of the stage, ever since the Restoration, for Hamlet to produce from his pocket pictures, not much bigger than two large coins or medallions;" and probably this was a following of the custom of Shakespeare's time, for we know on the authority of Downes the prompter, that "Sir William Davenant taught the players the representation of Hamlet as he had seen it before the Civil War," and that "Mr. Betterton took every particle of Hamlet from Sir William Davenant, who had seen Mr. Taylor,

who was taught by Mr. Shakespeare himself." The production of these small pictures may have been convenient in Shakespeare's time when scenes did not exist, and the stage boasted few accessories of a decorative sort; but the text implies whole-length portraiture. The late king is said to possess

> A station like the herald Mercury,
> New lighted on a heaven-kissing hill,
> A combination and a form indeed, &c., &c.

The miniature pictures could hardly contain whole-length portraits. Stage necessity, however, may have set the text at defiance, even in the poet's own period, and compelled Hamlet, who in a previous scene had censured those who were purchasers of his uncle's "picture in little," to carry such a thing about with him in his pocket, on the chance of his requiring to exhibit it to the Queen. Assuredly the original intention was that the pictures should be whole lengths, painted on the panels, or worked upon the arras of the Queen's closet. "But," as Davies asks, "if the scantiness of decorations compelled the old actors to have recourse to miniature pictures, why should the playhouse continue the practice when it is no longer necessary? The other mode of large portraits would add to the graceful action of the player, in pointing at the figures on the wainscot. He might resume the chair immediately after

he had done with the subject, and go on with the expostulation. However this is only a conjecture, which I throw out for the consideration of the actors." The actors may have objected, in that they would be required to turn away from the audience whilst dwelling upon the characteristics of the pictures upon the wall—the player being always desirous of presenting his full front face to the spectators.

Caldecott in his edition of Hamlet, while holding that "the pictures in little" might be as commodiously employed as modern miniatures, objects to their use, because of the inability of the audience "to judge of what they hear, to make any estimate of the comparative defects and excellencies, even of the features." The "station" or attitude, the combination and the form, could not in so confined a space be presented or made apparent to the spectators; upon such a subject, even the Queen and Hamlet could scarcely form an adequate idea. A print prefixed to Rowe's edition of Hamlet, 1709, exhibits the pictures as half-lengths hung on opposite sides of the stage; it may not be assumed, however, that this was the theatrical fashion of that date. To Holman, who first played Hamlet in 1784, is attributed an alteration of the stage arrangement of the pictures. A portrait of Claudius was seen upon the wall, and Hamlet produced from his bosom a miniature of the dead king. In 1793, when

Hamlet was produced at Covent-Garden, with some regard for scenic decoration—Kemble, as Hamlet, discarding the usual court dress, and assuming for the first time a Vandyke costume of black satin, trimmed with bugles —a half-length of "buried Denmark" was hung upon the wall, and the Queen wore upon her wrist a miniature of Claudius. It would appear that Macready originated the exhibition of two full-length portraits upon the wall. In his journal under date the 16th March, 1840, he writes: "Went to theatre (Haymarket), and acted Hamlet very carefully and very well. The new effect of the pictures on the wall of the apartment, was a very great improvement on the old stupid custom." The miniatures, however, found their way back to the stage. Mr. Charles Kean favoured them, and his example was followed by later Hamlets. In Mr. Fechter's arrangement of the scene, the Queen wore the miniature of Claudius suspended from a chain round her neck, while Hamlet wore, in like fashion, the portrait of his father. At the close of his eloquent comparison of the two pictures, Mr. Fechter's Hamlet tore the miniature of Claudius from the Queen's neck, and, as Henderson's Hamlet had previously done, flung it far from him. Signor Rossi's Hamlet exaggerated this vehement proceeding; he tore the picture from the Queen, bit it, spat upon it, and finally dashed it to the ground

and trampled upon it, executing a kind of wild dance, expressive of furious loathing, upon the fragments of the miniature. Mr. Irving and Signor Salvini, in opposition to all tradition upon the subject, dispensed with real and palpable pictures altogether, and directed the Queen's attention to imaginary portraits, visible only to the mind's eye. This treatment of the scene was found to be effective in performance, and avoids the difficulties of the situation, excluding alike the large paintings on the walls, which are apt to look like sign-boards, and the medallions or lockets, which the audience have to take for granted are portraits; it is clear from the text, however, that counterfeit presentments of a practical and objective sort were contemplated by the poet.

It was long the custom of the stage to entrust comic actors with such characters as Polonius, Shylock, the Witches in Macbeth, and the Lord Mayor in Richard the Third. Polonius was wont to be represented by low comedians, who were skilled in moving the laughter of the gallery—by Lovell, Nokes, and Cross, and afterwards by Griffin, Hippisley, Shuter, Baddeley, and Edwin. Garrick made creditable efforts to have the part interpreted after a more dignified fashion, and persuaded Woodward, on the occasion of his benefit, to appear as Polonius, and to play with gravity. It had been usual for the actor

of Polonius to wear a dress of a ludicrous description; but Woodward assumed a rich habit—cloth of scarlet and gold. "Whether," writes Davies, "this was in imitation of some statesman of the times, I will not be positive, though I have heard it so asserted." The result was disappointing, however; "so little was the audience pleased with Woodward, or Woodward with himself, that he never after attempted Polonius." Even in the theatre of to-day, although there has been decided reform in this respect, there may be often seen players of Polonius unduly anxious to be comical. 'The Merchant of Venice' had been adapted or mutilated by Lord Lansdowne in 1701, and as 'The Jew of Venice' had kept possession of the stage until 1741, when Macklin revived the original play, and endowed Shylock with the gravity and dignity that are his proper attributes. In the hands of the low comedians, Dogget, Griffin, and Anthony Aston, the Shylock of Lord Lansdowne's adaptation had been a very ridiculous figure; but this comic treatment of the character had so amused and gratified the public, that much doubt was expressed at the prudence of Macklin's reform. The actors, always timid about innovation, declared he would spoil the performance; Quin, who was to play Antonio, told him he would be hissed off the stage for his presumption; Fleetwood, the manager, urged him to abandon his resolution. Macklin

held firm, however; during rehearsal he simply repeated the speeches of the character, without disclosing by look, or tone, or gesture, the manner in which he designed to act it at night. He was most anxious as to the result; he was sure he was right; but he was not sure that he could persuade his audience to think so. When he entered, not a hand moved to encourage him. But after his first scene, the applause was enthusiastic, his triumph was assured. On the third night he was rewarded by Pope's well-known criticism:

> This is the Jew
> That Shakespeare drew.

There was an end for ever of the Jew that Lord Lansdowne had substituted.

Another stage tradition of some endurance related to the performance of Portia. When Mrs. Clive played this part, she reduced the trial scene to burlesque, by introducing mimicry of some well-known lawyer, the audience by no means disapproving, but even applauding warmly her exertions. For a time, the Portias who succeeded her were required to respect the traditions of her impersonation. It was, indeed, almost as difficult to suppress the low-comedy Portia as the low-comedy Shylock. A comic Lord Mayor in Richard the Third is said to have much gratified George the First, whose knowledge of English was imperfect, and whose tastes were of an unrefined sort. Indifferent as to

the Richard of the night, the king desired to see more of the comic Lord Mayor, who appears but once or twice in the course of the tragedy, and is really quite a subordinate character.

Garrick had contemplated appearing as the Copper Captain, an admired character, in the comedy of 'Rule a Wife and Have a Wife;' but in one of the scenes, tradition required of the Copper Captain a peal of laughter, and this Garrick found himself unable to accomplish satisfactorily. There was no absolute reason for the laugh, it was not necessary to the performance, it was merely a piece of stage effect; but it was felt that the audience would expect it, and would be disappointed at not obtaining it. Woodward was famous for his laugh. So Garrick, after repeated rehearsals, abandoned the part altogether. A stage tradition long interfered with the performance of 'Venice Preserved.' When Pierre, challenging the conspirators, addressed one of them in these terms:

Oh, thou! with that lean, withered, wretched face!

it was usual for an actor "of a most unfortunate figure, with a pale countenance," his sword half-drawn, to advance and confront his accuser, the audience the while laughing heartily. According to Davies, "the famous Tony Aston, the itinerant comedian, was the last performer of this ridiculous part."

Other stage traditions ordained that heroes should always wear plumes, and heroines trains; that soliloquies should be addressed to the pit; that green baize should cover the stage on which tragedy is played; that Cato in his closing scenes should wear a dressing-gown; that when the Tilburnias of the drama go stark mad in white satin, their confidants shall follow suit in white linen. And upon conventionalisms of pose and gesture, the players have laid great stress:

> Unskilful actors, like your mimic apes,
> Will writhe their bodies in a thousand shapes;
> However foreign from the poet's art,
> No tragic hero but admires a start.
> What though unfeeling of the nervous line,
> Who but allows his attitude is fine? . . .
> When Romeo, sorrowing at his Juliet's doom,
> With eager madness bursts the canvas tomb,
> The sudden whirl, stretched leg and lifted staff,
> Which please the vulgar, make the critic laugh.

The player's profession, as Lloyd sums up the matter:

> Lies not in trick, or attitude, or start;
> Nature's true knowledge is his only art.
> To this one standard make your just appeal;
> Here lies the golden secret—learn to feel.

CHAPTER XII.

A THESPIAN ACADEMY.

ONE hundred and fifty years ago some attempt was made to establish a sort of Thespian Academy or academical theatre, especially with the view of "improving the taste of the stage, and training young actors and actresses for the supply of the patent theatres." Mr. Aaron Hill, eminent at the time as the author or adapter of 'Zara,' 'Merope,' 'Athelwold,' 'Alzira,' and other plays, was the originator of the scheme, and entertained very sanguine hopes of its success. He had much concerned himself about the state of the drama and the shortcomings of the players; he had, indeed, been the occasion of some trouble and offence by his pertinacity in these regards. He was a copious writer of letters, a publisher of pamphlets, and the editor of *The Prompter*, a theatrical periodical. The freedom of his dramatic criticisms had at one time involved him in a personal conflict with the great Mr. Quin; actor and critic met, it seems, in the

Court of Requests, where "a scuffle ensued between them, which ended in the exchange of a few blows." His plan for forming a new and superior race of actors, and founding "a tragic academy" was communicated in letters to the poet Thomson among other persons, and it is clear that Mr. Hill had taken some steps to give effect to his idea. He writes in August 1733: "I have in a manner the whole company already formed, and can, I believe, be in readiness to open by the beginning of November at farthest with a race of plays and entertainments so new in themselves, and the manner in which they will be acted, that the success will, I think, be insured by the novelty." He further states that a patent had been offered him for a consideration of £400 per year, but that he thought a licence might be obtained upon cheaper terms, and he resolves to "put into all proper hands a pamphlet explaining the design, and why it deserves encouragement," and "to propose a subscription for six nights to a tragedy, and a fashionable folly in the rear of it, by way of trial whether the company and design are worth encouraging or no." It is presently explained that the tragedy in question was his own 'Zara,' an adaptation to the English stage of Voltaire's 'Zaïre.'

The project did not prosper, however. Two years later Mr. Hill is still deploring the state of the stage, which permits no

experiments to be made in regard to "a better choice of plays and a juster art of acting," and still looking forward, after "long and impartial reflection," to a new undertaking which may greatly mend matters. On this head he is so strongly convinced that he meditates a trial at his own expense, "without any subscription or other support than the countenance of a dozen or two of untaxed encouragers, properly-chosen great names, "to be affixed to the following declaration:— "Whereas certain gentlemen have proposed at their own expense to attempt an improvement, under the name of a Tragic Academy, for extending and regulating theatrical diversions, and for instructing and educating actors in the practice of dramatic passions, and a power to express them strongly, the success of which laudible purpose might establish the reputation of the stage by appropriating its influence to the service of wisdom and virtue; our names are therefore subscribed in declaration that we will protect and give countenance to this useful undertaking so long as the same shall be carried on with a skill and attention correspondent to the proposal."

It was fondly hoped that Frederick, Prince of Wales, a liberal patron of literature and the drama, would permit his name to be placed at the head of Mr. Hill's list of "untaxed encouragers;" in that case Mr. Hill promised

that in three month's time his friend Thomson should see established a new company of players, "whose beginnings would make credible whatever improvements he wished for." The Prince's name was to have been a tower of strength to Mr. Hill—"all the effect of a patent," he writes, without the noise and the difficulty;" and the opera-house in the Haymarket, for three or four nights weekly, was to have seen the outset of the experiment till success warranted the erection of a special edifice, "a new tragic theatre for extending and regulating the conduct of the stage, and appropriating its influence to the service of wisdom and virtue." But the Prince held aloof, and Mr. Hill's plan grew less and less practicable; he began, indeed, to question his own capacity for carrying it into operation. "I was pleased with the scheme," he writes, "until I came to consider where the names could be found, and by what means to engage them, without renouncing that retreat, that obscurity of choice, which I had assumed to myself as the share I laid claim to, among the most desirable blessings of liberty. Then I stopped, and began to discover a kind of inconsistency of purpose in the leisure and reflection which must be necessary for planning and conducting the design, opposed against the solicitation and address without which it would be found impossible to make it successful." Mr. Hill therefore renounced

interference with the stage and its professors; he left the theatres to their "modish frequenters," and the "fools of fashion," who looked for nothing moral or instructive in the drama; he despaired of reform alike in the plays, the players, and the playgoers of his time.

In later days other proposals have been made for ameliorating the condition of the British theatre. Macready projected the occupation of the Lyceum by a sort of commonwealth of players; a "proprietary of performers, the best of each class formed into a supervising committee, and receiving, over and above their salaries, shares in proportion to their rank of salary, and percentage proportionate to their respective advances of money," the desperate state of the stage rendering some such measure very necessary. Further, he applied to the Lord Chamberlain for a personal licence to perform the legitimate drama upon any stage, and memorialized the Queen for her special patronage, and for liberty to call his troop at Covent Garden "Her Majesty's Company of Performers." It was with the view, presumably of benefitting the stage, that Mr. Webster offered a prize of £500 for the best five-act comedy; and that the late T. P. Cooke bequeathed a certain annual sum to the most skilled producers of nautical drama—the bequest being afterwards inequitably diverted from the playwrights and applied to the use of the players. In like

manner, when that ill-starred institution, the Dramatic College, was first contrived under the happiest auspices, and amid general congratulations, there were day-dreamers and visionaries who looked forward not merely to the provision of a home for poor and effete players, but also to the establishment of a seminary for their children, and generally a school for the training and perfecting of the actors of the future. And now in this present year of grace we are favoured with proposals for the opening of a state-theatre, and the payment of the actors' salaries out of the national exchequer; private munificence waves in the face of the public a cheque for £1,000 towards the regeneration of the drama, and only demands that in due season other cheques shall be forthcoming to be similarly employed; while the advocates of a different nostrum proclaim that we need not so much a state-theatre as a Thespian Academy, a dramatic school wherein the youthful player may acquire his art; may learn to pronounce French and to read English verse; may be taught correct emphasis and accent, the value of prose composition and the balance of sentences; and find a "highly educated and cultured dramatic nursery," with courses of lectures by professors of various branches of art, libraries of costume and reference, lessons in fencing and deportment, and a theatre with practical instruction, &c.

These propositions have not a very feasible air, and are founded upon rather mistaken estimates of the actor and his arts. A good education is in these times necessary to the player as to other persons, but it may be presumed that he does not require a special institution to teach him the common rudiments of learning. Many libraries of reference, including works upon costume, are already open to the public; teachers of languages abound, and probably the other graces and accomplishments enumerated can be easily acquired without calling into existence a dramatic nursery expressly to inculcate them. It may be understood that the Thespian Academy is to commence its functions where the ordinary school or college leaves off. Acting, however, is not one of the exact sciences; the histrionic student must eventually emerge from the shelter of his academy, quit the side of his preceptors, and depend upon his own individual exertions. Will he be the better and stronger for the hot-house training he has received? Will not the Thespian Academy be open to the charges brought against the other academies of fine art, to the effect that they "perpetuate mannerism, cramp originality, and fetter genius?" Haydon was wont to declare that "academies all over Europe were signals of distress thrown out to stop the decay of art;" while Dr. Waagen held that "the academic

system gave an artificial elevation to mediocrity; that it deadened natural talent, and introduced into the freedom of art an unsalutary degree of authority and interference." Our Royal Academy has produced Royal Academicians; otherwise it can hardly be said to have advanced the interests of art. Mr. Froude once sighed for a Royal Academy of Literature; he was not allowed to suppose, however, that such an institution was at all desired by the literary profession generally. As a rule, indeed, academies are but empirical societies in aid of mediocrity and incapacity. It may reasonably be doubted whether a Thespian academy would be of any real utility or command any measure of respect. In a certain sense the artist, histrionic or otherwise, should be a student all his life; but he must study not as a pupil, but independently and for himself, observing life and nature at first hand with his own eye, and not merely through the spectacles of his veteran teachers. In truth, after he has fairly acquired the rudiments of his art, an artist is his own best instructor if he is aiming at originality, and is not content with mere imitativeness. Here is the evidence of Macready, a noble actor, well entitled to be heard upon this subject. He describes a visit he paid in 1845 to the Conservatoire, and he writes: "Heard the pupils of Samson go through their course of theatrical instruction. It is an institution of

the Government to train pupils, who are elected to the school, for the stage. I was interested, and saw the inefficiency of the system clearly; it was teaching *conventionalism* —it was perpetuating the mannerism of the French stage, which is all mannerism. Genius would be cramped, if not maimed and distorted, by such a course."

CHAPTER XIII.

OF MANNERISMS.

ACCORDING to the dictionaries "mannerism" means "sameness of manner," but in the theatre the word is usually understood to relate to such peculiarities, natural or acquired, as may affect the presence, gait, gesture, or speech of the individual player. Of course it is not the actors only that are chargeable with mannerism, but their profession—the art of personation or representation—is supposed to be more prejudiced than any other by confirmed habits of expression, movement, and demeanour. Every man may be said to be more or less mannered—to own certain personal ways and traits, which have become inseparable from himself, a portion of his very nature distinguishing him from his fellows; insomuch that seeing our friend at a distance, long before his features are discernible, we recognise him by his step, his carriage, his general air. When King John and his mother, Queen Elinor, discovered in Philip Faulconbridge's "large composition" some

tokens of Cœur de Lion—his trick of face and accent of tongue, the king having well examined his parts and pronouncing him "Perfect Richard"—we may be sure that likeness was also to be found in the illegitimate son's manner; that he had inherited the mannerism of his royal sire. Music has its mannerisms. Do not certain graceful cadences or dying falls always proclaim the composition of Mozart, of Mendelssohn, of Rossini, and the rest? While in pictorial art are there no mannerisms manifest upon the canvas, and at once revealing the hand of Millais, of Leighton, or of Watts?

Acting is so personal and physical a matter that mannerism is inevitable to it. The player is involved in the character he sustains, and invests it with his own peculiarities of aspect and conduct. Now and then an actor may succeed for a time in discarding, as it were, his own individuality, in so changing himself as to escape identification. It was said of the elder Mathews that he possessed the "art of extracting his personal nature from his assumptions," insomuch that "he was always least happy when he had nothing to assume," and that "in a plain straightforward part, where he had only to speak in his own personal character, he was scarcely above mediocrity." Mimetic power of this kind is of course of very rare occurrence, nor is it likely that it could be exercised in

relation to the loftier efforts of the drama. Assuredly the performances of our greatest actors have been marked by a confirmed mannerism. It could hardly be said of them that they extracted their personal nature from their assumptions. We read of Betterton that his voice was low and grumbling, though he could tune it by an "artful climax" so as to enforce attention even from the fops and orange-girls; that his "fat short arms were rarely lifted higher than his stomach; his left hand frequently lodged in his breast, whilst with his right he prepared his speech." Quin's action, we are told, was either forced or languid, his movement pondrous or sluggish; he was prone to long pauses, and to an artificial or cadenced delivery. According to Macklin's spiteful criticism, Garrick's "art in acting consisted in incessantly pawing and hauling about the characters with whom he was concerned in the scene; and when he did not paw or haul the characters about he stalked between them and the audience . . . . squeezed his hat, hung forward and stood almost upon one foot, with no part of the other to the ground but the toe of it; his whole action when he made love in tragedy or in comedy, when he was familiar with his friend, when he was in anger, sorrow, rage, consisted in squeezing his hat, thumping his breast, strutting up and down the stage, and pawing the characters that he acted with."

Mrs. Crawford described the histrionic method of the Kembles as "all paw and pause." Edmund Kean's acting was abundantly mannerred, for all its brilliancy and genius. His alternation of long pause and rapid utterances bordered on the verge of extravagance; his familiarity of speech and abruptness of gesture were often ludicrous in effect. Of a special instance, Hazlitt notes that "the motion was performed and the words uttered in the smallest possible time in which a puppet could be made to mimic or gabble the part." It was Coleridge, I think, who said of Edmund Kean's acting, that it was like reading Shakespeare by flashes of lightning: an equivocal compliment after all, for a more uncomfortable mode of studying a poet could not be conceived. Of Macready's mannerisms it is scarcely necessary to speak. He was, as all who recollect him will readily acknowledge, curiously angular of attitude and stilted of gait; as Mr. Donne, the late Examiner of Plays, has written, he "was unquestionably a man of genius, and as unquestionably, in our judgment, he inoculated his profession with a style of elocution which sets poetry, music, and nature alike at defiance."

There is danger, of course, of the physical conditions under which an actor may labour being classed amongst habits or vices of manner. To some, perhaps, the squint of Talma or the lameness of Foote seemed liable

to critical reproach as mannerisms. John Kemble might possibly have mended his system of pronunciation could he have been convinced of its erroneousness; but his hollow tones and "foggy throat" were certainly beyond his control. Hazlitt remarks upon the set of ingenious persons, who, having discovered that Kean was of small size and inharmonious voice, of no very great dignity or elegance of manner, went regularly to the theatre "to confirm themselves in this piece of sagacity." Yet Hazlitt was himself chargeable with similarly defective criticism when he complained of Jones, the popular light comedian, that he was always "the same Mr. Jones, who shows his teeth, and rolls his eyes, and looks like a jackdaw just caught in a snare;" and when he descanted so frequently upon the tall stature of Conway. Probably Mr. Jones could not help rolling his eyes or showing his teeth, or, from the point of view of Hazlitt, looking like a snared jackdaw; if Kean could not add a cubit to his stature, neither could Conway decrease his height. It may be noted, indeed, that Conway, feeling himself personally injured by the observations of the critic, called upon him for an explanation, and obtained from him a disavowal in the following terms: "Some expressions in my view of the English stage relating to Mr. Conway having been construed to imply personal disrespect to that gentleman and to

hold him up to ridicule, not as an actor, but as a man, I utterly disclaim any such intention or meaning in the work alluded to; the whole of what is there said being strictly intended to apply to his appearance in certain characters on the stage and to his qualifications or defects as a candidate for theatrical approbation. Signed, W. HAZLITT. May 24, 1818."

How far a performance is injured by peculiarities of manner each spectator must decide for himself. The question is one of degree. Mannerism, then, will always be in the achievements of the players; but theatrical illusion or the public sense of enjoyment is not really or necessarily overturned by this "dram of eale." In any case histrionic art must be accepted with its qualifications, just as a marble statue must carry with it the blue lines and blots in the stone. In comedy mannerism is scarcely felt as a blemish; the tragedians have succeeded in spite of it. The truth is, that the senses of sight and of sound are very open to reconciliation and accord with the circumstances in which they find themselves. It was said by or for Wilkes that his ugliness only placed him a quarter of an hour behind the handsome, there was such compensation in his promptness, and address. In like fashion, the actor, however weighed by manner, other conditions being favourable to him, may secure the good opinion of his

patrons. The public may have always something to forgive the players; but forgiveness has rarely been denied to them. In less than a quarter of an hour Mr. Fechter's English audiences accommodated themselves to his French accent; Mr. Betterton's Hamlet, probably in a very few minutes, constrained the spectators to forgetfulness concerning the actor's age and clumsiness of form and manifold infirmities. And as much may be said without doubt of later representations of Hamlet and of other characters.

CHAPTER XIV.

ADAPTED FROM THE FRENCH.

THE great civil war in England put an end to many things—the Elizabethan drama being among them. In time the theatres opened, but with a new stage, so to speak. Indeed, it was absolutely necessary to start afresh, for both players, and playwrights had vanished. With the exception of Davenant no dramatist who had written before the war wrote after the Restoration. Scarce an actor of repute who had played in the presence of Charles the First survived to appear before Charles the Second. The traditions of the theatre were preserved chiefly by the "boy actresses;" these performers had personated heroines before the closing of the play-houses; upon their re-opening the boys had grown to be men; they figured now as heroes upon the scene.

The drama had been pretty well starved to death. It was a thirty years' war, so far as the theatres were concerned. No new dramatist of note arose between 1630 and 1660.

Industry and intellect were turned into other channels; the times were troubled, the horizon was clouded, great discouragement prevailed. From 1647 the theatres were strictly closed for something like fourteen years. Before, the oppression had been of an intermittent sort—the closing had been only occasional. Thus in 1636 the theatres were shut up for ten months, and again in 1642 for eighteen months. The drama could scarcely exist upon such terms; the actor's profession had been already more than sufficiently precarious. He seemed now to be playing with a rope round his neck; an Order of Council or of Parliament might at any moment suspend him. He might have urged with Shylock:

> Nay, take my life and all, pardon not that:
> You take my house when you do take the prop
> That doth sustain my house; you take my life
> When you do take the means whereby I live.

When at the Restoration King Charles enjoyed his own again—he can hardly be said to have enjoyed it before—the drama was disinterred, as it were. It was like digging up the buried trunk of a tree. There was judged to be little life in it. Evelyn sadly noted in 1662: "The old plays begin to disgust this refined age, since his majesty's being so long abroad." The king did not conceal his preference for the foreign drama. The Earl of Orrery wrote to a friend: "I have now finished a play in the French

manner, because I heard the king declare himself more in favour of their way of writing than of ours." His lordship's example was followed by Dryden, Settle, Lee, Otway, Crown, and others. Rhyming, ranting tragedies became the vogue. In a preface to his 'Spanish Friar,' Dryden confesses: "I am sensible, perhaps too late, that I have gone too far, for I remember some verses of my own which cry vengeance upon me for their extravagance, and which I wish heartily in the fire; all that I can say for those passages is, that I knew they were bad enough to please even when I wrote them." But the king liked comedy even better than tragedy, and was fond of suggesting subjects and furnishing hints to the dramatists. He handed Mr. Crown a Spanish play which formed the groundwork of his comedy of 'Sir Courtly Nice.' Sir Samuel Tuke's play, 'The Adventures of Five Hours,' which so much amused Mr. Pepys, had also a Spanish original, to which the king had drawn the attention of the English playwright. And now our authors began to adapt from the French very industriously indeed. Dryden, in one of his prologues writes:

> French farce worn out at home is sent abroad,
> And patched up here is made our English mode.

For his own sins as an adapter, the poet urges in excuse the demands made upon his muse; he was, in fact, for some time under a contract

to produce four plays in each year. He says of himself:

> He still must write and banquier-like each day
> Accept new bills, and he must break or pay.
> When through his hands such sums must yearly run
> You cannot think the stock is all his own.
> His haste his other errors might excuse,
> But there's no mercy for a guilty muse.

Further, on behalf of his adaptations from the French, he pleaded that

> He used the French like enemies,
> And did not steal their plots, but made them prize.

"Bill was an adapter," observes the literary gentlemen in 'Nicholas Nickleby;' "certainly he was; and very well he adapted too—considering." In his 'History of the Stage,' the Rev. Mr. Genest calmly writes: "Shakespeare was a considerable plagiary." But the state of literature and of public culture in Shakespeare's time has to be taken into account. The Elizabethan drama was largely founded upon history and the chronicles, upon novels, and narrative poems of home and foreign origin contained in various collections and compilations, and upon older, poorer and ruder plays that had seen much service at the hands of the itinerant players, in booths, at fairs, and in inn-yards. Nor did our great poets merely impress the guinea's stamp upon precious metal the property of other people; they rather possessed the philosopher's stone of true genius, and turned all they touched into gold. It is not clear, however, that they

ever operated upon foreign plays; while it may be urged that they simply did not adapt from the French drama for the same reason that prevented Tilburina from really seeing the Spanish fleet—it was not yet in sight.

A French drama existed, however, albeit it remained without the range of vision of our poets and playwrights, and escaped for the present their manipulation. It has been described as "a demi-Greek, demi-Spanish" drama in form and theme; it dealt chiefly in tragedies of the classical pattern: it was not racy of the soil. The French drama, indeed, was hardly a national drama until the advent of Molière. But while the doors of our theatres were closed, and our players dispersed almost to disappearance, the French stage had been growing and thriving. It may be that no very great actors had occupied the scene; but Molière had been preceded by such dramatists as Hardy, Scudéri, Mairet, Tristan, Rotrou, and Pierre Corneille. A vigorous French branch was forthwith grafted upon the trunk of the British drama, which many had judged to be in a sadly decayed condition. Thenceforward our comedy possessed a Molière leaven. The system of borrowing from the French had now commenced; but there seemed nothing mischievous about it in the first instance. The drama had been accustomed to recruit its strength from various sources, as a patient for curative purposes might resort to the

herbs and simples of foreign countries without thereby risking any loss of nationality. And in the beginning the borrowing was not excessive; it co-existed with lending and exporting; it interfered in no degree with home production.

In his comedy of 'Sir Barnaby Whig,' produced in 1681, D'Urfey has introduced a song beginning, "Molière is quite rifled, then how should I write?" At this time there had indeed been much rifling of Molière on the part of our playwrights. Nearly all his productions had been in turn presented either wholly, or in part, upon the English stage; some of them had repeatedly undergone adaptation. Translations of his works had been published here in 1717, in 1739, and again in 1755—the English and French being presented occasionally upon opposite pages; these were found to be very convenient editions by the English dramatists who did not know French. The comedy of 'L'Etourdi' was of considerable assistance to Dryden in contriving his 'Sir Martin Marrall,' and, a century later, to Arthur Murphy in writing his 'School for Guardians,' which is also compounded of scenes from 'L'Ecole des Femmes.' Dryden borrowed two scenes from 'Le Dépit Amoureux' for his 'Evening's Love;' the same comedy also supplied Sir John Vanbrugh with the materials of his 'Mistake.' 'L'Avare' was adapted by Shadwell in 1671, and again by Fielding in 1733. Wycherley borrowed from 'L'Ecole des

Maris' in his 'Country Wife,' and from 'Le Misanthrope' in his 'Plain Dealer.' To 'Le Médecin Malgré Lui,' we owe not only Fielding's 'Mock Doctor' but Lacy's 'Dumb Lady,' and certain scenes of Mrs. Centlivre's 'Love's Contrivance.' 'Tartuffe' became known here as 'The Non-Juror' of Cibber and the 'Hypocrite' of Bickerstaffe. From 'Don Juan ou Le Festin de Pierre,' issued Shadwell's 'Libertine.' M. de Pourceaugnac figured on the English stage as 'Squire Trelooby,' and as 'The Cornish Squire;' portions of the comedy may also be traced in the English plays called 'The Careless Lover,' 'The Canterbury Guests,' and 'The Brave Irishman.' 'Amphitryon' was adapted by Dryden, the musical accompaniments being supplied by Purcell. Dryden's version was subsequently re-arranged by Dr. Hawkworth. Of 'Sganarelle,' six or seven adaptations were brought upon the English stage. Betterton's comedy, 'The Amorous Widow,' afterwards condensed into the farce of 'Barnaby Brittle,' had its origin in 'George Dandin;' upon this work was also founded a musical after-piece called 'May and December.' 'Les Femmes Savantes' was adapted by Ravenscroft as 'The Female Virtuosos;' Cibber in his 'Refusal' had recourse to the same play. 'Les Fourberies de Scapin' was adapted by Otway, and again by Ravenscroft. Shadwell's 'Psyche' is a version of Molière's play bearing the same name. The little comedy called 'The Ladies à la Mode,'

which Mr. Pepys saw in 1663 and attributed to Dryden, was no doubt an adaptation of 'Les Précieuses Ridicules.' Occasionally an English play was constructed of scenes derived from two of Molière's comedies. Thus, Ravenscroft's 'Mamamouchi, or the Citizen turned Gentleman,' seems to have laid under contribution, both 'M. De Pourceaugnac' and 'Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme,' and much irrelevant matter often added to the adaptations. A comedy contrived by one James Miller, and called 'The Universal Passion,' is a curious amalgam of Shakespeare's 'Much Ado about Nothing' and Molière's 'La Princesse d'Elide.' In a prologue Mr. Miller confesses his debt to Shakespeare, but carefully suppresses all mention of his obligations to Molière. As a rule, indeed, the adapters did not acknowledge themselves borrowers. Cibber, dedicating his 'Non-Juror' to the king, withholds all reference to Molière, and attributes the success of the play to his happy choice of subject, asserting that his duty and his concern in the interests of truth and loyalty had made him more careful in the conduct of this than of any of his former endeavours. The epilogue to the tragedy of Sir Walter Raleigh, produced while the 'Non-Juror' was in the full enjoyment of its popularity, contains the following lines:

> Yet to write plays is easy, faith, enough,
> As you have seen by Cibber in Tartuffe.
> With how much wit he did your hearts engage;
> He only stole the play; he writ the title-page.

The dramatic works of Corneille, Racine, and Voltaire were also subjected to adaptation, and presented from time to time in various forms upon the English stage.

Few objected to the proceedings of the adapters. Now and then a dissentient voice was raised, but it was soon silenced. By the majority the French stage was viewed as supplementary to the English; it was not feared that the one would ever be accepted as a substitute for the other, or that native manufacture would suffer from the importation of so much foreign produce. A certain Mr. Joseph Reed, however, a ropemaker and a playwright of inferior fame, registered a protest against the plagiarism of his time. In the preface to his mock-tragedy of 'Madrigal and Trulletta,' 1758, he writes: "When I reflect on the prevalency of this iniquitous practice—i.e. plagiarism—I am ready to fall down on my marrow-bones to return my humble and hearty thanks to Goddess Nature for so kindly disqualifying me for the perpetration of such offence by giving me the knowledge of one language only!" It is certainly strange to find a man proposing to kneel down and thank Nature for his ignorance of French. Mr. Reed continues: "The filching of plays under cover of translation, Heaven knows, is a crime of no short standing; nay, some of our countrymen have carried their villainy to a yet greater height, and

stolen plays with little or no alteration at all. Among these abandoned plagiaries, I am told, was Aaron Hill, Esq., of turgid, altering, and translating memory." Mr. Hill is then charged with appropriating and producing as his own a translation of Voltaire's tragedy of 'Zaïre,' which a Mr. Thomas Hudson, an usher in a grammar school at Durham, had adapted for representation upon the English stage. The translation, sent up to London "for the perusal and examination of some connoisseur in the drama," had reached the hands of Aaron Hill, who had, it is alleged, "pilfered the copy, and, the better to conceal the theft, given out that the piece was absolutely unfit for the stage." Hill's 'Zara,' produced at Drury Lane in 1736, became a popular acting play. Probably his version of Voltaire had been prepared quite independently of Hudson's translation.

But if in the eighteenth century France was considerably filched of its drama by England, there was much following of suit on the part of France. If we robbed, we were robbed in turn. M. Ducis began to adapt Shakespeare to the classic stage of the Théâtre Français. The plays of Farquhar, Congreve, Lillo, Moore, Thomson, Sheridan, and others, were translated into French. The novels of Richardson and Fielding were converted into French dramas. The success of 'Beverly,' *tragédie bourgeoise* founded on the English play of 'The Gamester,' and produced in Paris

in 1768, was most remarkable. The audience, we learn, returned to the performance again and again, notwithstanding *les frémissements convulsifs* they experienced by reason of the distresses of the story. Great success likewise attended the production in Paris of a version of 'The Tancred and Sigismunda' of Thomson, the names of the hero and heroine being changed in the French version to Blanche and De Guiscard. In 1765, 'Tom Jones,' a comedy by M. Poinsinet, with music by M. Philidor, was received with extraordinary applause. Of 'Tom Jones à Londres,' another comedy written by M. Desforges, dealing with the same subject, and presented at the Théâtre des Italiens, Paris, the Baron de Grimm writes, that having been in danger of condemnation before the end of the first act, almost indeed in the first scene, it was afterwards very favourably received. "The author has followed as faithfully as he could the fable of Fielding's charming novel; he has only retrenched certain of the characters which do not concern the main intrigue, and could hardly have been brought upon the stage without over-charging the drama and in some degree offending decorum. . . . The dialogue, though it cannot be called brilliant, is vivacious and easy; if the style sometimes fails in regard to elegance, it is almost always easy and natural. The characters are varied and well-supported; perhaps sufficient credit has hardly

been given to the author for preserving the local touch which renders them so spirited in Fielding's work. If the character of Western appear too rustic, the fault is rather to be charged upon the actor, who, being unable to seize the true genius of it, put more caricature into his action than properly belonged to it." 'L'Homme Sentimental,' a version by M. Pluteau of 'The School for Scandal,' produced in 1789, proved less successful. The comedy was found to be unsuited to the French stage. "The great liberty of the English theatre may permit these bold attempts; they are revolting to our sense of dramatic propriety." In short, Sheridan was pronounced to be too immoral for the French stage. The conduct of Lady Teazle was judged to be "too scandalous for representation." The Anglomania prevailing in France at this time, and invading even the sacred precincts of its theatre, was strongly condemned by the Baron de Grimm. It would be fatal, he maintained, to the gallantry of the French, their taste in dress, and talent for society. Marshal Biron and other noblemen of the ancient court were of a like opinion. To the Duc de Chartres was ascribed the introduction of Anglo-mania into France, and the Comte d'Artois had been only too willing to follow his example. Louis the Sixteenth, it was said, had expostulated with his brother on the subject. Visiting London in 1790, the Baron de Grimm writes:

"Of twelve or fifteen pieces that I have seen performed in London more than half were translated, or at least imitated, from our theatre. On this and other accounts should we not say that the two nations which have so long been rivals in glory and interests have at this time consented to ape each other to the utmost?" Upon this subject the Baroness d'Oberkirch, a lady of Alsatian origin, writes: "It looks as if we were willing to forget our noble past in laying the foundation of an inglorious future, and that we would exchange our ancient fashions and customs for those of neighbours that we detest. It is really most absurd!" On our side of the channel Horace Walpole was complaining in 1769: "There is a total extinction of all taste: the theatre swarms with wretched translations and ballad operas," &c.

The system of mutual adaptation, if it may be so-called, led to much confusion touching the paternity of plays. Many works acquired thus a complicated sort of pedigree. Dramas crossed and re-crossed the Channel until a grave doubt arose as to their proper nationality. Were they French, were they English? They had appeared upon the stages of both countries. Now and then a play underwent translation, and then was translated back again into its original language. M. Dutens, a Swiss Protestant clergyman, resident many years in this country, in his

'Memoirs of a Traveller,' published in 1806, relates how he translated certain English comedies, not merely for the sake of improving himself in the language, but with a view also of trying what impression they would make upon a French audience when he returned to Paris. Accordingly he translated Congreve's comedy, 'The Way of the World,' entitling it 'Le Monde comme il va.' But with this work the French actors would have nothing to do; they were amazed, they said, that any man could ever have imagined anything "so extravagant, silly, and unnatural." M. Dutens then applied himself to the farce of the 'Lying Valet,' written by Garrick, and first produced at the Goodman's Fields Theatre in 1741. It occurred to him, however, that the author had probably derived the farce from a French source: the humour of the dialogue, the nature of the story, and the characters all seemed essentially French. Before undertaking the translation, therefore, he wrote to Garrick, enquiring whether such was the fact. "He returned a very polite answer," writes M. Dutens, "assuring me, not only that he had not taken his piece from the French, but that he did not know any piece in which the plot, the character, or the subject had any resemblance to his. Notwithstanding this assurance, when I presented it to the French theatre in Paris as a new piece, they returned it to me

saying, that it was 'Le Souper mal apprêté' of Haute-Roche, with some slight alterations, which, upon examination, I found to be the fact." Garrick seems to have been deficient in candour; the 'Lying Valet' was in truth founded upon 'All without Money,' being the second act of a compound-sort of a comedy called 'Novelty,' or 'Every Act a Play,' written by Motteux, the translator of Don Quixote, and produced at the Lincoln's-Inn-Fields Theatre in 1697; and 'All without Money,' was certainly derived from the French. The old English comedy of 'The Devil to Pay,' the plot of which is borrowed from the story of Mopsa in Sir Philip's 'Arcadia,' has travelled to France, and then in various forms been reimported to this country. So, in later times, the late Mr. Oxenford's farce of 'Twice Killed,' which is believed to have a German original, has appeared in France as 'Bon Soir, Signor Pantaloon,' to be brought back to this country as a translated operetta, 'Good Night and Pleasant Dreams:' while a piece founded upon the novel of Jack Shepherd has furnished Paris with a melodrama, which, in its turn, has been adapted from the French and made to do duty again as an English play. Among other adaptations it is curious to find the 'Beggar's Opera' translated into French by one Adam Hallam, an English actor, and successfully played at the Haymarket Theatre about 1730.

It is to be said for the older adaptations from the French, that they were freely executed, and often contained much original matter: they are rather fair imitations than absolute translations. They rarely suggest that the adapter was borrowing because of his own deficient inventiveness or barrenness of wit. Perhaps Fielding, in his versions of Molière, ventured nearer to simple translation than did any other dramatist of the eighteenth century. But there came to be more and more borrowing from the French: our stage seemed so occupied at last with adaptations, that room could not be found upon it for works of native production. It is hard to distinguish the exact moment when the system of adapting was found to be exercising an injurious influence upon the English drama. That the literature of the stage had declined in worth, and that the taste of the public for theatrical exhibitions had gravely deteriorated, became at last so manifest that, in 1832, the House of Commons appointed a select committee to enquire into the subject. The committee found that the drama had been subjected to depressing influences, due to "the uncertain administration of the laws; the slender encouragement afforded to literary talent to devote its labours to the stage; and the want of better regulations as to the number and distribution of theatres." The committee reported further, that the privileges

enjoyed by the patent theatres had neither preserved the dignity of the drama nor been of much advantage to their proprietors; and that dramatic authors were subjected to indefensible hardship and injustice; the inadequate protection afforded to their labours being alone "sufficient to divert the ambition of eminent and successful writers from that department of intellectual exertion." No word was said, however, as to the important effect upon our drama and dramatists brought about by the wholesale importation of French plays.

In a letter Mr. Boucicault has lately published in the North American Review, touching the decline of the drama, he ascribes this misfortune to the appearance upon the scene of "the commercial manager," educated on the far side of the bar-room counter with no more spelling and grammar than are possessed by urchins of ten—usually a gambler—and by accident ruling the destinies of first-class theatres, exercising literary and artistic functions, selecting actors, reading and determining the merit of dramatic works, and presiding generally over the highest and noblest efforts of the human mind. "To the commercial manager," writes Mr. Boucicault, "we owe the introduction of the burlesque, opera bouffe, and the reign of buffoonery. We owe him also the deluge of French plays that set in with 1842 and swamped the

English drama of that period. The usual price received by Sheridan Knowles, Bulwer, and Talfourd, at that time for their plays, was five hundred pounds. I was a beginner in 1841, and received for my comedy, 'London Assurance,' three hundred pounds. Three years later I offered a new play to a principal London theatre; the manager offered me a hundred pounds for it." This is a considerable fall in price. Mr. Boucicault omits to notice that in the interval he had met with some discomfiture as a dramatist; his second comedy had failed completely—had been withdrawn after two representations. However, this hardly justified the offer of a third of the sum paid for 'London Assurance' as the price of his new work. Naturally, he objected. The manager observed in reply: "'I can go to Paris and select a first-class comedy; having seen it performed, I feel certain of its effect. To get this comedy translated will cost me twenty-five pounds. Why should I give you three hundred or five hundred pounds for your comedy, of the success of which I cannot feel assured?' The argument was unanswerable," continues Mr. Boucicault, "and the result inevitable. I sold a work for one hundred pounds that took me six months' hard work to compose, and accepted a commission to translate three French plays at fifty pounds a piece."

The commercial manager was simply buy-

ing in the cheapest market; that it happened also to be the nastiest did not signify much to him. The public was as patient as could be wished; *émeutes*, because of the badness of theatrical entertainments, had become things of the past. No doubt judicious playgoers absented themselves more and more; but London is a populous place, and there are always people who will attend the theatre, by way of doing something or going somewhere in the evening, no matter what may be the entertainment offered. The manager did very fairly. There was even a fall in the price of adaptations from the French. They were presently advertised in the 'Era,' that authentic organ of the histrionic profession, as for sale to the first comer at the price of a few pounds, even a few shillings. For the system had its drawbacks. The commercial manager bought cheaply, but he could not hinder other managers, his rivals, from purchasing upon the same terms, or lower, if that were possible. It was thus brought about that the play of 'Don Cæsar de Bazan' was represented at about seventeen London theatres at once; such drama as 'Les Bohémiens de Paris,' 'Les Frères Corses,' and 'Paillasse' (Belphegor), sharing the same fate. But, of course, there were, as there are, adaptations and adaptations, not to mention mere translations. Certain adapters gave themselves airs, took credit for much ingenuity and originality,

protested that adaptation was an art requiring dramatic talent. Pretence and assumption of this sort are not lacking even in the present day, for adapters still prevail amongst us. Mr. Charles Reade, as an expert, has given evidence in the matter. He says of the adapters' claim to dramatic talent: "This is the pipe of vanity and ignorance; they have never invented, or they would know the difference. Now, I have done both. I have adapted French pieces, with invariable success, and I have invented. I am, therefore, a better authority; and I pledge you my honour, that to invent good pieces is very hard, and to adapt them is quite as easy as shelling peas. . . . I can lay my hand on a dozen adapters of French pieces to the English stage, who know neither French or English nor the stage. So much for the class 'adapter,' in which talent of any kind is notoriously the exception, not the rule. Out of every twenty adapters how many are ever heard of in letters except when they bray in a Frenchman's skin? Three? Certainly not. Two at the very outside." Mr. Reade, presumably, being one of the two, and Mr. Tom Taylor, possibly, the other. Mr. Tom Taylor having often figured as Mr. Reade's collaborator. That the question had an ethical side, that the French inventor had some moral right to share in the profits arising from his own invention, seems to have oc-

curred to the adapter only rarely or in quite recent times. The plea of custom was admissible in answer to the charge of absolute literary dishonesty on the part of the adapter, although the custom had originated, as we have shown, at a remote period and in a harmless sort of way. Molière—there is irreverence in mentioning him in connection with the modern adapter—had proclaimed wit to be his available property wherever found. This is hardly a sufficient excuse, however, for the offender whose fingers are too frequently discovered in other people's pockets. Times change, and morals and manners with them. What is valorous enterprise and exploit in one year is sheer buccaneering and piracy in another. Let it be granted that there has been amendment in this matter during late years. Our legislature has made a mild effort or two to benefit and protect the French author; and here and there adapters have been found willing to pay for what they were wont to pillage. But the system of adaptation has weighed heavily and for many years upon the national drama, dwarfing, cramping, and degrading it. Even now when M. Chose produces in Paris a successful melodrama, entitled 'Le Voleur,' let us say, that famous playwright Jones—possessing himself of it, lawfully or otherwise—does not scruple to produce it here as 'The Thief,' a new drama by Barabbas Jones, Esquire,

without a word of mention of the original author. And when the curtain falls upon the English version, it is Jones who steps in front of the footlights to receive the thanks of the audience for the entertainment they ascribe to his unaided exertions and great creative intellect; and in time Jones persuades himself and even persuades others, that he is a dramatist and a genius. In truth, the deeds done by adapters from the French to the English stage, the pretensions they advance, and the assumption they permit themselves, would not be tolerated in any other department of literature—would indeed be denounced and censured in the severest fashion if put in practice outside the theatre. The sad defence is left to the adapters, however, that the literature of our stage has almost ceased to be literature in the ordinary acceptation of the term.

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